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MOVE AND ACCOUNT



gford.





Lord Carlingford
with the Author's love,
and blessing.

ABOVE AND AROUND;

THOUGHTS ON GOD AND MAN.



BOVE AND AROUND;

THOUGHTS ON GOD AND MAN.

BY

JOHN HAMILTON,

AUTHOR OF "THOUGHTS ON TRUTH AND ERROR," ETC.

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PREFATORY NOTICE.

THERE are three sources in the Bible from which thoughts on God and man find suggestions and help. *Historical* records, *prophetic* declarations, and *utterances which have evidence in themselves of their own truth.*

The two first depend upon proof that the writings are genuine and the writers authentic. The last has its proof and voucher in itself.

It is no want of respect to the two first sources that *these thoughts* are chiefly suggested by the internal evidence of Scripture, followed up by such reasoning as this evidence leads the mind to. There are but few who can so test historical and prophetic writings as to ascertain that they are genuine and authentic; but any person of fair education can test those principles, the truth of which being *in them* shines out of them, and by

doing so gives a light which illuminates the truths that may be in the historical or prophetical writings.

In the confidence that thoughts founded on those principles which have their evidence in themselves, and, followed up in the line of those principles, will lead to essentially true conclusions, these pages are published. In the hope, too, that these thoughts may help to fill the chasm that separates and keeps asunder persons who, seeking the truth, should pull together ; for truly Bible and Reason, Religion and Science, are at one, and it is only by a distortion of these that they are made contrarieties.

INTRODUCTION.

I WOULD fain introduce myself to you, my Reader, as an old friend, holding out my hand for a friendly grasp in return, depending for any satisfactory intercourse, as much, at least, upon your inclination to receive me favourably as upon my wish and endeavour to make a favourable impression on you.

I offer you this little book in the hope that you may get some good out of it; but truly not in the hope that it will satisfy you, for that would be a most unsatisfactory failure of its purpose, which is rather to act as a *whet* to the appetite of inquiry than to supply what can even approach to the satiating that appetite which it should rather stimulate.

It is not in my thoughts that you will find here what I hope you look for, but if you will exercise your own mind in pursuing with me some “thoughts

on God and man," you will soon pass beyond the suggestions in this little book. Nevertheless, do not despise it for its smallness. To reduce its size has been my great endeavour, and its being as large as it is I consider a great failing. If I were more gifted it would be less bulky and better, as a coin of gold is of more value than a larger one of mixed metal.

However, I will hope that you may find some gold in it notwithstanding the presence of the alloying baser metal, for "gold" less or more there must be where there is sincere thought on God and man.

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A B O V E A N D A R O U N D ;

THOUGHTS ON GOD AND MAN.

ABOVE AND AROUND.

THOUGHTS ON GOD AND MAN.

THESE pages are intended to assert, suggest, or illustrate for consideration, some important matters. Such as,

1. That every man has a God—whether the true God, or an idol, or an idea. That which he worships with his life's devotion is *his God*.
2. That the true God is the Creator of all creation, and the source of all life.
3. That man can attain to a knowledge of this God.
4. That the fact of man being able to attain only a very *limited knowledge*, does not prevent that from being *real knowledge*.
5. That upon man's knowledge of God, and of himself, and of the relations of God to man, depends the character of man's life, whether it be advancing goodness and happiness, or increasing badness and unhappiness.

6. That the character of each person's religion depends upon the correct or the erroneous thoughts on God and man leading to reasonable worship (Romans xii. 1) in the whole life, or to superstitious observances as religious duties (*see Galatians iv. 8—10*).

7. That the word of truth (*Logos*) speaks to man in various ways of utterance. And man, as God's offspring, (*genos*) can comprehend the divine utterances.

That the Bible and reason agree in teaching what we should think of God and man.

That Christianity, pure and simple, unadulterated and undiluted, sets God and man before us as they really are, and calls on us to "THINK ON THESE THINGS."

THOUGHTS ON GOD AND MAN.

THOUGH it is evident that such thoughts can never exhaust the subject, or even approach a consideration of *all* the truths involved in it, yet *some* truths may be clearly considered, and proved beyond all doubt; and as these grow in number and in clearness the thought which has been exercised upon them will not be lost labour, but will tend to raise our estimate of divine goodness, and to improve our own character, both as to humility and exaltation, two characteristics which are more closely related than might be supposed.

The purpose of *thought on God and man* should not be to ascertain or to prove that our views of the Godhead and of human nature are according to truth ; but to ascertain and prove what is truth, and to conform our views to this as far as ascertained and proved.

And in respect of the questions that will arise, and of which the answers remain unascertained or unproven, we may have opinions as to the probable reply to some, and of the rest we must for the present admit our ignorance.

In the meantime, whatever we may have attained to, our wisdom is to act upon what we know.

THE POCKET-WATCH AND THE TRUE TIME.

THE large clock in the church tower may have its use ; but it is not to the large steeple-clock that we appeal every time we want to know the hour. It is the little watch which we can have in the pocket that serves this purpose. So it is with our religion, that real religion which influences us at every hour. A bulky religion cannot be useful like the pocket-watch ; a religion which is not at hand to influence us at all times fails in a very essential quality.

“The covetous man who is an idolater,” has he not his watch at hand in his pocket ? If “the God of this world” has his worshippers, they need no bulky religion to mark their opportunities. Their time is always ready.

Is it not probable that these and other worshippers are more consistent and constant at all times in their worship of their gods than professing Christians are generally found to be, because the simple mainspring of Christian religion has been incumbered with so much unnecessary machinery and ornament, that it is too bulky for an ordinary mind to have always at hand ; so that it makes us too dependent upon the large clock in the steeple, which is not always accessible nor always intelligible, being so large and so lofty ?

It is not that the pocket-watch is a *safe* guide because it is at hand, but that it is sure to be the *usual* guide, as to the hour. Both steeple clocks and pocket-watches require to be set to the true time regularly ; for all human machinery is uncertain, and sure to err occasionally, and both watch and clock will therefore be certain *to err more and more* if left to their own regulation. They must be compared from time to time with the sun, which rules the day, and gives the law which regulates the division of time by its course.

There is one hour of the sun's course at which it is most easy and convenient to mark the true time, and to see whether our watch is correct. That hour is just when the sun is at the highest—or at noon day.

So if we wish our daily and hourly religion to be *correct* in its guidance and influence, we shall regulate it by something in the heavenly sphere of divine light, which may be compared to the sun at its highest.

This highest and brightest manifestation of divine excellence is God *as revealed by Jesus.*

And this revelation is shortly but fully summed up in the sentence, "God is Love."

Our religion as Christians is to be like our Father ; and if so, our duty and privilege is to compare our religion with His character, as revealed to us in the highest and brightest manifestation.

The evidence of Divinity is *Power.* The supreme manifestation of power is Goodness, and the perfection of goodness is Love.

For power without goodness *cannot* make enmity give place to love.

And goodness without love is imperfect.

Love implies all goodness.

Benevolence is good, but it is not Love.

Beneficence is good, but still it is not Love.

Generosity is good, yet it is short of Love.

Benevolence may be disposed to do good kindly.

Beneficence may do good effectually.

Generosity may give abundantly.

These may be met by *thankfulness* and *gratitude* ; yet there is something wanting still to the perfection of *love* manifested on one side and produced on the other.

Love requires, for its satisfaction, the love of those who are loved.

The love therefore which loves an enemy can only be satisfied by winning the love of that enemy ; and he who truly loves will use every means to *reconcile* the enemy to himself.

This is what the divine Spirit in Christ reveals or makes manifest to us, if we would see it.

God's love to us can never fail, because it cannot be satisfied till we love Him : and if, when we were enemies, we were reconciled to God, by all the manifestation of His goodness and love, much more being reconciled to Him, we shall be beloved, as *loving sons* of our Father.

The apprehension of this character of God's love, and therefore of Christian love, must give a tone and character to the whole of religion, keeping before us the fact of God always seeking our love, as it were, saying, "MY SON, GIVE ME THY HEART!"

The love inspired by the fact that our Father seeks our love, when it is seen and felt, will stir up a corresponding love in us, finding in us a chord in unison that cannot help responding in harmony, and we shall see the beauty and feel the privilege of cultivating *the same love* towards our fellow-men. Even the heathen saw that to a right man nothing human could be indifferent.

Though this view of God's love is not the only test of our religious little watch (or great clock being in true time, yet it is the essential noon-day of the sun of our religion, and it is the test to which I would put all that is in this little book ; in the hope that it may lead others to see the *reasonableness* as well as the *Christianity* of taking the example of Divine love as a token which should pervade our love which is not only benevolent, to our enemies, but which seeks

its fullest satisfaction in gaining the love of all. Till this crowning character of love is ours, there will be a failure in our endeavours to be like Him whose name we, as Christians, bear.

Man is apt to think it beneath him to seek the love of those who are unwilling, or who care not to love him, or are his enemies. But when any one, who was formerly an enemy, is reconciled to God, he will see that who wins an enemy's love is much more a conqueror than he who crushes and tramples down a foe. And as no less victory can satisfy Divine love, so he who, as a beloved child, would imitate his Father, and by similar conquest partake of His blessedness, can be satisfied with no less a victory; and will devote his life thus to overcome his enemies, to kill their enmity and to quicken their love.

The joy of winning an enemy to be a friend infinitely exceeds the joy of destroying or being avenged upon an enemy. It is the joy which is heavenly, over one sinner that repents. It is the joy of Jesus which he desires His followers to enjoy in fulness. (John xvii. 13.)

They who have devoted themselves to win the love of others, and have met with coldness, or worse, in return, can sympathise with the love, the Divine love, which perseveres in calling us to partake of the joy which is divine, but which cannot be ours till we appreciate Him who first loved us, who loves with an everlasting love, and whose love of His enemies can be outshone only by the satisfying complacent joyful love with which He loves those who are reconciled to Him:

REASON.

THE better anything is, the more dangerous in general is its misuse. This is very much the case with the word "reason," and that which it expresses.

We speak here of the word "reason" as signifying that faculty which distinguishes human beings from mere animals.

Both those who honour reason, and those who decry it, often use the expression, "The light of reason."

Some mean the light which (as they imply), reason *gives* from itself.

But others mean the light which reason *receives* to itself. Reason is to the mind what the eye is to the body ; it receives the light, but gives none.

So he that would walk by the light of reason is like a man who would expect his eyes to give him light in the darkness.

But they who decry reason are like those who would shut their eyes in the day, and refuse to use them because they *give* no light.

These last are more astray than the others, for often reason gets credit for *giving* the light which shone from without.

"Whatsoever doth make manifest is light" in one sense or the other, enlightening the bodily eyes or the eyes of the mind ; and in either case it is that which conveys intelligence of what is, that is, of the truth.

The bodily eye receives its intelligence by the rays of light of this world suited to its powers of reception.

The eye of the mind receives its intelligence by many very different messengers, which are, in the New Testament, expressed by one Greek word "LOGOS," translated by several English words—all expressing "*means of conveying intelligence*"—(such as "WORD," "Communication," "Saying," "Speech," "Account," "Utterance," ("Things," *by which, as tokens, matters might be made known*)—any means in short by which a message can be conveyed to the understanding is *light* in this sense: the most common and intelligible is by spoken or written words. So Jesus is called both "THE LIGHT" and "THE WORD," because He showed in Himself and manifested by His works *visibly* to men's eyes what His message was, and also appeals to our reason, heart, and conscience, by invisible but *reasonable* utterances, in all His life and His teachings, He Himself being that by which God uttered His message of truth and love.

As the light would be useless to us if we had no eyes, and eyes would be useless if there was no light, so every manifestation of God or of truth would be useless if there was no *reason* in man to appreciate it; nor would there be any use in reason and its powers if there were not such manifestations to receive.

DISIKE TO EXAMINE OUR OPINION.

WHEN we think upon God and man we should in earnest try to get rid of the prejudices to which we all are more or less subject ; generally none are so much so as those who are least inclined to suspect themselves. When any one has an *opinion* as to any question, especially any religious question, two rules should regulate the way in which it is held. *First*, it should not be lightly given up or altered, but honestly defended. *And secondly*, it should be fairly subjected to proof, if questioned, and honestly altered or given up if proof so requires.

Probably every one will admit these rules to be right, nevertheless many shrink from acting upon them, especially on religious questions.

It has been found not unfrequently, that persons who insist strongly upon the *authority* of the Christian scriptures are unwilling to submit to that very authority, even where persons less impressed with a sense of it would do so.

A question has been proposed, thus, As the Scriptures do plainly speak of some *reconciliation* brought about by Jesus, *Who* is it that is said to be reconciled ? Does the New Testament say anywhere that "God is reconciled," or imply that any one who was never an enemy could be said to "be reconciled" ?

When it has been proposed to examine the places in the New Testament where *reconciliation* is

spoken of, it has happened that persons who have already taken their stand upon the opinion that "*the reconciliation*" spoken of there applies to *God* as being reconciled to sinners, decline or refuse to submit their opinion to the result of a search into the places where the subject is mentioned. Such persons, however sincere, are very inconsistent, and till they break the bonds of their prejudice they cannot be said to "*search the scriptures*," or to inquire honestly into any questions of truth and error.

The above mentioned case is only one of many such which must occur in the course of *Thoughts on God and Man*, and while the writer hopes that he may be on his guard against his own prejudices, he earnestly exhorts the reader to watch against his also, and to test by *scripture* every *scriptural* question and assertion, and every question by *reason* and adequate *evidence*. Thus, and only thus, will sure progress in the truth be the result of *Thoughts on God and Man*, or any subject worthy of thought and research.

THOUGHTS ON THOUGHT.

THE thoughts of our mind are of very different kinds and qualities. Some thoughts are brought into our minds merely by the impression of objects outside of us, some are suggested by other people without our seeking them; and in these cases the thoughts are too often received and adopted as ours with

little or no care to consider or weigh them, especially if they agree with former opinions or prejudices.

Thoughts of another kind are the offspring of thinking minds. These seek knowledge which does not present itself unsought ; and those who really think apply their power of mind not only to consider the things which are seen, but to find out unseen things, and to discover the relations of these to each other, and thus not only to attain knowledge, but to multiply and increase the possibility of more and more knowledge in an ever-flowing stream.

Those whose thoughts are limited to the reception of the first kind of thoughts may be likened to a quart jug, which has capacity to receive and hold a quart of water poured into it.

Those whose thoughts are of the second order we liken to a springing well, bringing forth and sending forth the sparkling stream which can satisfy the thirst of minds that think.

Thought is passive when the mind suffers itself to be occupied with things or subjects which present themselves.

Thought is active when the mind, without being careless of what may present itself, is occupied in considering chosen objects and subjects in any or every domain of knowledge, science, art, imagination, or fancy, at will. The habit of active thought is a great source of usefulness and happiness. The indulgence of habitual passive thought tends quite the other way.

BEGINNING TO THINK.

As a flame communicates its fire to a lamp without self-loss, so God communicates his spirit-life to man, and each individual man becomes a divine spirit, with the similar power of communicating life without losing, as a lamp lighted at an original source of light kindles other lamps. Hence the *created* man, made of earthly material with mortal life, is called a quickened or "LIVING SOUL," one to whom a life is *given*; while the spirit-man *inheriting* divine life from the Father is called "a QUICKENING," (or *life-giving*) "spirit," being capable of communicating *its life* to its offspring.

The creature-life, or mortal life, is given to be of *service* to the spirit; but, like everything given to *serve* a purpose, if it be not kept in its appointed place it becomes of *dis-service*, and from being a help and a blessing it is made a hindrance and a curse.

When men come to a right view of the case, they see and acknowledge that it is far better for the whole man that the flesh, with its impulses and passions, and the mind appertaining to it, should be always controlled by the spirit which is divine. It seems a difficult question why the spirit does not constantly and from the beginning reign?

But when the matter is duly considered it may be understood, that while the highest characteristics and faculties of humanity are divinely inherited and are themselves divine, and make their possessor in so far

like God, the highest characteristics and attributes of God are not only not inherited by humanity, but cannot possibly be inherited.

A *capacity* to receive the things that are given or taught by God, and *capability* to learn from these, and so to acquire knowledge and wisdom, and eternally to increase these acquisitions, are the divine *inheritance* of humanity. But the knowledge and wisdom themselves must be man's own acquisition by the use of the divinely inherited powers. If otherwise put into him they would be mere instincts like those of the beasts.

Thus it befalls (as it befell no doubt the first of our race, though they inherited nothing evil), that the impulses and tendencies of the lower nature, offering more immediate gratification, were looked upon as best, and allowed to get the upper hand; and however innocent the indulgence under the control of wisdom would have been, without that control they get the rule, and when the slaves rule the evil result is proverbial.

So one who had fought a good fight and was still carrying on the battle says, "All things are lawful for me, but I will not be brought *under the power of* any." When we think of God and man, it will be plain that in the *highest* sense *God only is wise*, or can be.

THE HUMANITY OF GOD AND DIVINITY OF MAN.

THERE is a thought which must, though perhaps often unconsciously, pervade all real thought about God and man.

Let us consider *the Humanity of God, and the Divinity of man.*

To deny, or even to doubt either of these, is to be at sea without a guiding star or a compass, in any attempt to advance in the essential knowledge which makes existence worth the name of *life*.

"This is life eternal, to know Thee, *the only true God*; and Jesus the anointed" and *only perfect man*.

The humanity of God does not imply that God is *human* as man is ; man being necessarily imperfect in all respects except as to such capacity to receive and capability to use instruction as can be inherited by the offspring of a perfectly great and good being ; God's humanity is in being *humane*, or possessing every good quality which human beings are capable of attaining to, aiming at, or forming an idea of.

It is true, when all this has been attributed to God, there will, from this very attribution, follow the overwhelming conviction that the greatness and the goodness of God are not limited by His humanity, but are "unsearchable."

Nevertheless, in as far as we are like Him, we *can* understand and know Him in the glory of such good-

ness as is comprehensible by human beings, and as we grow more up to the use of our divinely-inherited capacity and capability, we shall perforce understand more of the infinitely great goodness of the Eternal. The more we are like Him, the more we shall see how unlike we are to Him in the infinity of His greatness and goodness. While the very greatness of His greatness, including the greatness of His love, must, in proportion as we see it, cast out all feeling that could make us *afraid* of God.

Far from lowering our idea of the Eternal by thus viewing His humanity, it gives the highest most adorable and glorious idea we are capable of having ; enabling us to conceive all conceivable goodness in Him, and to perceive, beyond this, a length and breadth, a depth and height that passeth knowledge. In short, to conceive *that* the “greatness is unsearchable,” all the more surely so, as we cannot conceive *what* this unsearchable *is*. His fullest definition of Himself in word or in work is “I AM.”

As the humanity of the Eternal does not lower the idea of His divine perfection, but on the contrary evermore exalts it, so the divinity of man does not diminish the idea of his human imperfection, but increases it.

The knowledge of the fact *that* man “born of the flesh is flesh,” does not tell us *what* the fleshly man *is*.

The knowledge of the fact *that* the spirit-man, offspring of the Father of spirits, “born of the spirit, is spirit,” does not inform us *what* spirit *is*.

But we can clearly trace the two natures in man,

and know him as he is ; we know *that* he is, not the less surely if we do not know *what* he is. Like God, his existence proclaims, “ *I am.*”

If man were only a body of flesh, with its own senses and capabilities, he could never be educated into a state to partake of spiritual joy, and could not be blamed for not giving heed and obedience to spiritual teaching and law. But he is *not* only a body of flesh. There is a mortal fleshly body and nature of man ; and also a spiritual body and nature, not created, but the offspring of God, and of His kind. He is therefore *capable* of receiving the teaching and of obeying the law of his Father (1 Cor. ii. 12-14) ; and so can become partaker of the joy of his Father. This capacity and capability constitute the Divine nature which is attributed to man throughout these *Thoughts.*

DISCIPLES AND OTHERS.

ALL men may be thus divided into two sorts.

The meaning of *disciple* is *one who learns by inquiring*, as we read in Luke viii. 9, 10, “ His *disciples* asked Him saying, What might this parable be ? And He said, Unto *you* it is given to know the mysteries of the kingdom of God, but to *others* in parables.”

So again Jesus charges His *disciples*, “ Go ye and make *disciples* of all nations,” and then He adds,

"teaching them" (Matthew xxviii. 9, 10, *Revised New Testament*).

To teach anything to pupils who are not desirous to learn is slow and imperfect work, but when we come to the highest subjects, such as God and man, the attempt is peculiarly vain until the spirit of disciples (the inquiring spirit) is stirred up.

If the preachers or teachers alone are active, and the *others* remain merely passive, however good may be the thing taught, and however successful may be the result in obtaining professing *followers*, these can only attain to a slavish submission, never to an intelligent *imitating* of their teachers, much less of Him of whom Christian disciples teach. (See 1 Cor. xi. 1, New Version) "Hearing they may hear, but will not understand." Let us "take heed how we hear," lest we remain among the *others*, instead of advancing among the *disciples*, whether in divine or human knowledge.

THE LAW OF LIBERTY.

TRUE LIBERTY.

A WILL to choose does not give liberty to those who, in ignorance of the truth, do not see what is really good or evil.

To have true liberty we must be free from outward constraint, and also from inward ignorance.

No matter how free the will may be to choose good or evil, the *ignorant* cannot, with a reasonable choice, choose aright.

Freedom of will is a divine attribute, but to use it divinely we must "know the truth," in order that freedom from error may enable freedom of will to choose aright.

True liberty is only attainable when we know the truth.

But although the knowledge of good and evil is requisite to enable me to choose aright, this *knowledge* alone does not insure that I shall choose rightly. I may know, and in my reason approve, what is right and good, and yet, influenced by habits, impulses, and passions, I may follow that which is evil. *Knowledge*, even of good, if not rightly directed, *puffeth up*, and makes us think ourselves "like gods knowing good and evil." We may have our mind filled with the understanding of "all mysteries and all knowledge," and however good this may be (if rightly applied), it may only lead to that belief of God which is the faith of those who in abject terror tremble. The *heart* as well as the mind, the *affections* as well as the understanding must be engaged, or else no satisfactory result will follow.

Knowledge of good and evil may be likened to the stones for a building ; they are useless, or worse, mere stumbling-blocks, unless built up in due form into an *edifice*.

So all knowledge, unless brought under the action

of love, is nothing worth ; knowledge puffeth up till love *edifieth*—builds the stones together into an *edifice*. Then, and not till then, knowledge is indeed profitable (1 Cor. viii. 1 ; xiii. 2).

Because *loveless knowledge* is not divine, but is often diabolical, and is not satisfying, but often tormenting, some would decry knowledge. This is as unreasonable as it would be to decry *building-stones*, because if left unbuilt they are useless, and only cause obstruction. All this is true, not only as regards what is commonly called “*religious knowledge*,” but *all knowledge*.

The principle that *love* to God and man pervading all application of *knowledge* to practice in life would tend to religious, social, and political satisfaction and welfare, will hardly be disputed. If we cannot appeal to evident proofs of the success of the experiment (for as yet it remains to be *fully* and fairly tried), we can unhappily bring abundant proof of the results of the opposite experiences in each department of human life.

With all the growth of knowledge in these days of progress, how *little* is the advance of human happiness ; and if there is even a little, is it not to be traced to the introduction of a more humane spirit giving a better tone to human life ? and this chiefly attributable to the partial reception of Christianity, which if fully and freely received would have effect in proportion.

If in our day all the power and energy which has, without the pervading principle of love, been

applied to the acquisition of knowledge, and to the practical use of acquired knowledge, had been directed unselfishly to the benefit of the human race, assuredly not only would modern discoveries and inventions have produced much more benefit, in the increase of real happiness, but in all probability the power of man over all created things would be vastly more developed, and that knowledge would be immeasurably increased by which we can make fire, water, air, and earth our servants, not to mention the use we can already make of the source of the lightning to do our behests in many ways.

But on the other hand, the highest knowledge of divine and eternal things, as well as the merest knowledge of mechanical and temporal things, can be used unlovingly and so as to puff man up in his selfishness.

As selfish man can construct a system of machinery by his knowledge, imperfect as it is, by which simply for his own individual gain he can have all sorts of work performed, so in his unloving knowledge he constructs a system of religion, the intended end of which is his own salvation from the suffering which his wrong-doing would bring upon him, and his own enjoyment of some fancied heaven of bliss from which all pain and sorrow is to be excluded.

A man will be like *his god*.

If that which he worships is one whom he figures to himself as powerful to act, and arbitrary to act as he will, without reference to the welfare or the happiness of any or of all who can enjoy welfare

and happiness, or can suffer woe and misery, the worshipper of such a supposed god will resemble his god.

THOUGHTS AND THOUGHTS.

THERE are two sorts of thoughts, two ways of thinking of God. *First*, we may fix our mind upon that which we have received as our God, whether we attribute a really divine nature and character to that which we worship or not.

Secondly, we may so apply our mind to think of God as to acquaint ourselves more and more with the nature and character of the true God, the Creator of creation, the Lord and Giver of life.

If any one adopts a wrong idea, and then religiously fixes his mind, and thinks much of God, the result may be a troubled, fearful remembrance, if the idea adopted be that of a terrible and arbitrary being, or of one less than almighty, and wise, and good.

One who thus thinks, however much he fixes his thoughts on God, or rather on the distorted picture which he has taken for God, can never by such thinking find any benefit either by increase of comfort or of holiness.

The right and profitable thought on God or on man is such as leads to inquiry, and thus to higher and deeper acquaintance with the subjects most worth

thinking of with such thought as will issue in deed and in truth. The profitable thoughts are then not *merely* thoughts carefully fixed on that which we have received as truth concerning God and man ; but such as lead us on to prove all things, making diligent search, reverently, but not afraid to approach the deepest and the highest questions about all that is divine or human.

Fixing our thoughts upon erroneous notions, the more we think of them as if they were unquestionably true, the more we shall be led to adopt that tone of religion which tends to seek deliverance from deserved and necessary punishment, rather than from the state of mind and heart which leads to the conduct that deserves punishment and makes it necessary. And thus is produced that unimproving sort of religion, which on one side makes room for a hope that God may ever be induced to refrain from any punishment which He purposed to inflict, and on the other side prevents the assurance that God will never cease to call sinners to repentance.

When a man sees that sin is suicide, and that by it he cuts himself off from "*the life which is life indeed,*" he will understand the exhortation which says, "Shall we continue in sin ?" God forbid ! how shall we who have died (victims to our sins) determine to live any longer therein ?

THE BODY AS AN INSTRUMENT.

By "*body*" is here meant the visible body of flesh and bones by means of which actions are performed at will.

If the instrument by means of which anything is to be performed is good, and in good order, the result may be good according as he who uses the instrument is capable. But if the instrument (as a piano, steam engine, or plough) is out of order, he who uses it cannot make good results, if any, however capable he may be. But no one imputes to the instrument the will or the skill, although the resulting action depends upon its being in good order; and no one denies the existence of him who works well by means of the instrument when it is in order, but cannot do so when it is deranged, less or more; nor does any one suppose that because the production of the music depends upon the organ being in tune, therefore the instrument originates the music.

So it is with the mortal body, and the spirit of which it is the instrument, for all sorts of action, whether by visible motion or mental operation. If the nerves are out of order the will of the spirit can no more make the limbs work than the engineer can get his disordered locomotive to progress. If the brain is diseased, the spirit cannot exhibit the action of will or of thought, any more than the musician

can produce melody, or even any sound, if his instrument is less or more out of tune or out of order. But it would be as absurd to impute will, and power of thought to brain or nerve-material, and to deny spirit life and existence to be the employer of these instruments, as it would be to impute to an organ or a locomotive an indwelling life-power to purpose and execute their music or progress—and to deny the necessary existence of the engineer or the musician because without the instrument he could produce no visible or sensible effect.

It is not only a good thing to be able to answer the arguments of those who deny a spirit life and existence different from mortal flesh and blood, but it is desirable also to cultivate the habit of thinking and speaking of our body with its powers as an *instrument* to be used at our will, that we may neither undervalue the body nor overvalue it—not expecting from it what it is not calculated to perform, nor blaming it for what is the result of the misuse or neglect of it by the spirit.

“HOW TO BE OF ONE ACCORD.”

A SURE way *not* to attain to that accord is to insist on agreement upon many points; and this might lead us to guess both why we are not of one accord, and to see how accord might be attainable.

The literal translation of the passage which suggests the title, does more than suggest the answer. (Phil. ii. 2.) The means of attaining "*accord*" which he suggests is "*giving thought to the one thing*,"¹ which is translated "*being of one mind*," whereas the oneness is in reference not to the thought or mind, but to the subject to which it is to be applied, minding the *one* thing being the suggested root of concord.

If we could agree as to the relation of God and man, it would tend more than anything else to oneness with one another. Jesus is recorded to have prayed, "HOLY FATHER! keep through Thine own name those whom Thou hast given Me, that they may be one, even as we are."

Through the name of "*Father*" the whole family are one, and when they have this relation implanted in their mind and fixed in their thought, the very root of accord is planted; and though various branches may grow in diverse shapes, the tree will be one—one root bearing it, one sap pervading it, and the fruit will be accordingly. (Gal. v. 22.)

Thoughts habitually directed towards "*this one thing*" should tend to that accord and oneness which will be the world's witness to Christianity. (John xvii. 11, 21.) There would be as a voice behind us crying, "This is the way, walk ye in it." "Ye are brethren, why do ye wrong one to another?"

Thus "brotherly love may continue," and a real accord be established, though on many subjects variety of opinions may continue; as when a band of

¹ τὸ εὐ φρονῆτες.

musicians all tune to the one key-note given by the leader harmony is produced, though there be variety of instruments and of sounds, but the one thought pervades all—all are of one accord.

There are several other plans by which it is sought to attain the desired accord—such as acts of uniformity, articles of religious faith, subscription to creeds, forms of worship—but it is only too evident that these, if they do not hinder, do not effect the purpose.

There is a prevalent habit of wresting words out of their apparent meaning, or out of the sense which they were intended to express, or using forms of words which the hearer takes (and is aware that he takes) in a different sense from the utterer. This last-mentioned abuse of the use of words leads to a kind of bargain between those who disagree, to call their “discord” “harmony,” which misuse of words is, perhaps, meant in 2 Pet. ii. 3, “*feigned words*,” which is rather “*plastic words*,” expressions capable of being pressed into various shapes. But if the same piece of soft *plastic wax* was to be by you formed into a cube, and by me into a sphere, that does not make the forms accord with one another, though both of us may agree to call it “uniformity.”

As long as differences exist in the mental powers and in the temperaments of various people, so long will there be differences in the details of their religious views and beliefs, forms, and ceremonies; but if they can find one essential point of agreement, such as the

Fatherhood of the Eternal, and make that their root of religion, their bond of love, then there is hope of *accord* among those that differ—differing as much as trumpet, flageolet, drum, and cymbal, yet, like these, each contributing to the general effect in harmony.

It is by no means meant that the differences that may continue are unimportant, but that they should not hinder that accord which would show itself in all being gracious to each, and each to all, each seeking more his brother's weal than merely to deliver his own soul by performance of his duty.

The recorded words of Jesus, “My Father and your Father, My God and your God,” afford ample subject for such thoughts on God and man as, if followed up faithfully, must tend to make us “of one accord, of one mind.” Then let us think of these things which the *one* thing suggests. The love of God which is in Christ. God's love to us reacting in our love to God and man.

And will this make us all disagree no more? Nay! When the whole body is fitly joined together and compacted by that which every joint supplies, “it edifies itself,” not in sameness but in love, not in uniformity but in unity, every joint joins differently formed members together. Differences abound, but not divisions. As in the body, so in the community, where such joints prevail to unite together in love the differing members, feeling and showing that they are “members one of another,” and have need one of another.

Till love advances to such height and depth that the *need* of others' welfare is felt and declared, it is not yet the love of Christ. It is a love rather of the nature of duty than of pure unselfish desire for our brother's good. Such defective benevolence will not produce the requisite "joints" to attach the differing members to one another, and to cause all to work together in accord, as in a healthy man head and foot, eye and hand, heart and stomach, all having need of each and each of all, are one body. Less accord is simply not accord at all, and without accord is simply discord, which means no happiness. (1 Cor. xii. 4—27.)

ON MIRACLES.

THE word means simply "*wonders*."

And it is generally used to express such wonderful deeds as seem to be beyond human power.

A "*miracle*" is always a "*sign*" of a power in him who performs it, not only greater than that of the beholders who wonder at it, but greater than they can conceive to be in any man unless by a peculiar gift for the occasion.

Therefore, he who performs such actions gives a token that he is superior in knowledge and power, and is worthy of attention.

But it is not and cannot be a token that whatever he teaches is worthy of being received as true, as indeed the Christian scriptures warn us. (Matt. xxiv. 24.)

The popular idea that miracles are a trustworthy sign of the divine mission and authority of him who works them is not merely giving them an undue character (supposing they are admitted to have been wrought), but the prevalence of this idea throws a darkening cloud over the character of Christ and of Christianity, as if a voucher was required for the establishing of the truth of the good message which Christ proclaimed.

The more I am acquainted with the character of Jesus the Son of the Eternal, as shown in His recorded life, and with the character of the Father as revealed by Him, the more absolutely and really divine do they appear. The love of Christ constrains me (yet not putting outward constraint on my will) to acknowledge Him as the Son of the true God, and to acknowledge the Eternal as perfectly adorable ; and although I am more and more aware, at each step forward in the knowledge of God, how very small is the portion of His greatness and goodness which I have apprehended, yet what I have gathered from the mixed and broken details which have come down to us of Christ, and His revelation of His Father and ours, takes all my understanding and all my affections captive. I doubted while I could, and was afraid till I perceived how absurd it is to be afraid of a *really great* Being. And if I can lead even one to think fearlessly about God, as Jesus has revealed Him, I shall not have lived in vain. Perfect love casts out the fear that has power to torment, and he who without fearfulness occupies himself with thoughts on God

and man will see that, now at least, man has no need of miracles to vouch for Jesus, and for His revelation of the goodwill of God to man: and as for the miracles themselves, if some who can see and feel the love of God have doubts about them, the truth can stand not the less firm in their estimation, the truth namely which pervades the principles of Christianity, and which declares itself with irresistible power in the expressions of that love which seeks the welfare of the most virulent or degraded enemy, and which shows itself in that self-sacrificing devotedness of purpose that will not be satisfied till the last enemy is reconciled, convinced of his errors, brought to hate his sins, and constrained by divine love to love the God of all patience and consolation.

Every historical record and every accepted miracle, which has helped to declare or to illustrate the principle of Christian love as the all-conquering power, belongs as it were to the scaffolding by which the edifice of Christianity is built up. But once erected, the edifice does not stand upon the scaffolding, though it might not have been built without it, and it must be valued accordingly. Nevertheless it will be plain that the shaking or even the removal of any part of the scaffolding would not involve the smallest danger to the building, to the raising of which it has been useful. Thus also if doubts arise as to the genuine or authentic accounts of some of the recorded events or miracles, this cannot shake the faith which is built up on the principles of Christ. Belief of historical relations or of recorded miracles is the

act of our mind grasping that which seems to us worthy of trust; but faith in God as revealed by Jesus is the power of self-asserting truth taking hold irresistibly of our mind and affections, leaving no room for questioning, when once we perceive the principle of all-conquering unconquerable love. The idea was well expressed by an unlearned but enlightened Christian thus—

“ IT’S NOT MY GRIP OF GOD, BUT HIS GRIP OF ME.”

The man who could say this, if even he could be accounted “weak in the faith,” should be “received” as a witness, “but not to doubtful disputation,” as to questioned records or questionable miracles. But the deepest acquaintance with Scripture history, with conviction of the historical truth of all that is recorded there, will not avail to bring about the change from enmity to love, and from the mind that would rather be saved from punishment than from sin, to the inmost desire to be like Jesus, good, and doing good. To work this change there must be seen and felt the spirit which underlies Christianity, and the principle which pervades all divine action and teaching.

KNOWING AND DOING.

"IF YE KNOW THESE THINGS, HAPPY ARE YE IF YE
DO THEM."

THE great peculiarity of the teaching of Christ is not only to make us know about God, and about goodness, but also to make us *love* God, and to cause us to *like* goodness, and do good heartily.

Though outward force can not *compel* us, nor in that sense *make* us love or like anything, yet there is a force which can make us do so.

It is not enough that we may become in a great degree "*like gods, knowing good and evil.*"

We may have this knowledge and yet only think of goodness as a yoke or a bondage, and wish its rules were less strict.

We may believe that there is one God the Maker of the universe and Giver of life, and this knowledge may only make us "believe and tremble."

Yet to attain knowledge is in itself good. Though taken by itself it only *puffeth up* like a vain bubble of froth; in the hands of love it furnishes the material with which love "*buildeth up a house*" (*edifieth*) a mansion to be a secure and permanent dwelling. (1 Cor. viii. 1.)

The law which tells of goodness is not received as it must be to do its work in our religion, until it is not only in our minds, understood and acknowledged, but written in our hearts, approved, appreciated, loved; and till this is so we may believe that there is a Lawgiver and may call Him "*God*," but we cannot *love* Him while we *dislike* what He insists on in His law. (Jeremiah xxxi. 33; Hebrews viii. 10.)

Pure and simple Christianity is different from all other religions, and from all deformed systems which have been grafted upon pure and simple Christianity; and the essential difference lies in this, that the teaching of Christ declares to us not only that God is good, but that because He is God He must need be good, and that the joy of the Eternal God is in the welfare of His offspring.

Then that the joy of "*the perfect man*" is in that same divine love which delights in goodness; that love which is the fulfilling of the law towards God and man; that love which is shown in the joy with which Jesus endured the cross and despised the shame, when no less sacrifice would suffice to convince man of His love, and to win man to turn from the wrong to the right way.

The joy of the perfect man, in short, is *being good and doing good*, and He who perfectly enjoyed that joy would have us partakers of His joy, the only *unfailing* satisfaction which one or all of God's offspring can enjoy. (John xvii. 13.)

PAST AND FUTURE SINS.

If I desire more earnestly to be kept from sinning in future than to be delivered from suffering for past sins, it is not that I feel the less shame and sorrow for my past sins, but that I have the greater horror and dread of sinning in future.

DOUBT.

If I am afraid to doubt, is it not plain that I do doubt?

INSPIRATION AND INSPIRATION.

THERE are two sorts of inspiration : the inspiration of a speaker or a writer, and the inspiration of a hearer or a reader. No utterance, however inspired by a holy spirit, can profit those who are not inspired, or under the influence of a holy spirit in hearing or reading. And no utterance in speaking or writing will be without profitable instruction of some sort to those who hear and read under such influence. An Indian proverb says that different characters are like bees and flies. Bees find flowers, and get honey

even from poison plants ; flies seek corrupt sores, and draw and spread the corruption. Christianity tells us not only to "take heed *what* we hear," but that we should take heed "*how* we hear."

PRIESTS.

THERE are two kinds of priesthood, and only two, in Christianity. That of the *great High Priest* of our profession, and that of all Christians. (*Hebrews iii. 1 ; 1 Peter ii. 5—9.*)

SACRIFICES.

A SACRIFICE is something offered up :

1. To propitiate or to appease an enemy.
2. To express gratitude for generosity or benevolence.
3. To mark affection towards the beloved.

Two very different feelings may either of them suggest the offering of the *first* kind. (1) The desire to reconcile the enemy and extinguish the enmity. (2) The desire to escape the vengeance of one of whom we are afraid. The one is offered in the spirit of love, the other in the spirit of fear. The one is peculiar to Christianity, the other is found in all other religions.

SUFFERING.

THERE are two kinds of suffering—"loss" and "pain." When suffering (of loss or of pain) is willingly endured or intentionally incurred, it may partake of the nature of sacrifice—in the belief that the suffering will be taken as an expiation of past offences which the offended would not freely forgive; or with the purpose of showing our love by benefiting or of pleasing another when our doing so involves, necessarily, the incurring of suffering.

Though suffering is in itself an evil, yet it becomes admirable when willingly endured, where an act of duty or of love cannot be fulfilled without it. But to incur *needless* suffering merely in the idea that it is a virtue, or in hope that it will be pleasing to any one, or can render another favourable, is a mistake or an insult to the character of him to whom such sacrifice is offered.

WHAT CAN BE KNOWN.

It may be asserted that whatever is, may be known.

It is true that the mind of a man may be unable to receive the knowledge of certain things, from a

natural defect of the mind, or from defective cultivation of the powers, but this is very different from the thing being *unknowable*.

An Egyptian labourer living on the banks of the river Nile knows the river; but not only is he ignorant whence it comes and whither it goes, but if he ever thinks about these things, he probably merely supposes some beginning of the stream from an inexhaustible source, and its conclusion in a bottomless gulf which never can be filled up. If a philosopher were to assure him that the gulf into which the river flows supplied constantly the source out of which it runs, he would probably apply his little power of observation and reflection to convince himself that he knew better than to believe any one who said that the water which ran *down* to the low place would go *up* to the high place, and all attempts to explain the eternal circulation of the waters running down the river to the sea, and coursing up the skies in vapours and clouds to fill the springs in the mountains, would fail to find an entrance into his mind, and the knowledge of *whence?* and *whither?* would seem to him as much beyond man's attainment as the knowledge of a beginning or an end of all things appears to minds at the highest degree of cultivation hitherto attained. But we have no right to say even this is in its nature unknowable.

LAW AND TRUTH.

ALL law implies an advantage in obeying, or a reward for obedience; or else a loss in disobeying, or a penalty for disobedience.

A law which implied neither good by obedience, nor evil by disobedience, would, in fact, be no law. Its voice would say, "Keep the law or not, it makes no difference."

So where a lawgiver says, "*Do this*," or "*Thou shalt not do that*," it is implied, "You will find advantage by obedience, or suffer by disobedience."

A son could have neither love nor respect for a father who commanded him to do, or not to do, something, if he believed that the father knew all the time that the thing commanded would not be beneficial, nor the thing forbidden hurtful in its consequences.

Laws may be of three sorts :

1. A law which declares a *truth*. The force of such law does not depend on the lawgiver, as truth does not depend on the utterer of what is true.

2. An arbitrary law which depends on the will of the lawmaker, and which would not be law unless by that will. Such law *may* be just and useful when the lawmaker is good.

3. A capricious law, which is an arbitrary law made at the mere will of a lawmaker without reference to right or justice.

EVIDENCE OF TRUTH.

THERE are two kinds of evidence on which we may reasonably accept that which claims to be true :

1. The evidence that is in the thing affirmed. This is *internal evidence*, and requires no proof from any voucher or authority. (It is especially moral evidence.)

2. There is the evidence of credible and competent witnesses. (This is historical evidence.)

In the first case we perceive the evidence in the thing itself, and we believe it directly.

In the second case we indirectly believe it, because we believe the witness is worthy of our belief.

The *first* kind of evidence is always the most simple and most sure when it is to be had.

But in very many cases the second is the best we can procure, and with due care and circumspection it may be practically sufficient.

Law and *Truth* are brought together in one view by the words "THEY LAW IS TRUTH."

For God is not in this case a *lawmaker*, as many suppose.

Men *make* laws; God *gives* THE LAW, WHICH IS TRUTH.

A *made* law was no law till it was made. THE TRUTH was always true.

A law that is made can be unmade by the law-maker.

The truth cannot be made untrue.

God's law is as if there were two ways through a deep quagmire, one safe and firm, the other full of inevitable pits.

And a benevolent lawgiver stood there to say,
“*This is the way, walk ye in it, and be safe.*”

“But *that* is not the way, walk ye in it and you will come to grief.”

Because the lawgiver is benevolent, and cannot lie, he *gives* this law. It is the TRUTH.

He cannot make it otherwise, nor make it so.

The wrong way is truly wrong.

The right way is truly right.

And by the giving of the law by the lawgiver, is the knowledge of this truth given.

So he whose law is the truth *cannot* be an arbitrary much less a capricious lawgiver.

Overlooking this fact, it is imagined by some persons that a good and mighty God could have made an easier code of law; so that breaking His laws should not incur such severe penalties, nor such strict observance of them be required in order to attain ultimate full happiness.

No one can be perfectly happy while he dislikes the law which he has to obey.

It is equally true that if any one likes to obey a guidance which is wrong, he will never thus attain to the satisfaction of his heart's desire.

Therefore in order to the possibility of attaining to real satisfaction of the heart's desire we must, of necessity, not only be under a law which we like, but

must like the law which we *are* under. And this law must be the truth.

Then we shall like the giver of that law of truth, for it will be also to us the law of liberty. (Psalm cxix. 44, 45.)

Without being selfish a man may like that which he sees is for his good. And the more unselfish is his idea of that good, the more will he like and in his heart approve whatever tends to it.

That law which he feared while it was only kept in his mind, now as it is written in his heart, he loves ; he is reconciled to the lawgiver whom he dreaded, and whose strictness he disliked, even to the degree of enmity.

He who in any real understanding of it receives the good message, written in the life and sealed with the death of Jesus—will perceive that without being brought to love the law which is truth, and therefore the lawgiver who is true, no way could be found or made by which ultimate satisfaction could be reached.

WHY IS MAN SURE TO SIN ?

MAN is an intelligent intellectual being ; that is, he is capable of knowing, thinking, and reasoning, as well as perceiving.

From the first he must be ignorant, or be caused to know by some power not in himself, or must

acquire knowledge by the use of capability in himself.

Man's *origin* is from God, his *destination* is to be with God, as a son with the Father. And from his origin, and for his destination he has divine capability to choose at his will, and to acquire the knowledge of good and evil.

In this life and in this world he has a school in which, by reason of the use of his senses, the observation of all things, and the experience of events, he may attain to the knowledge of good and evil, and to the wisdom to choose what is really good, and so become capable of enjoying the inheritance for which he is destined.

Because God is a good Father, He will not deprive man of his place, *as a son* in the destined inheritance, by forcibly withholding him from freely choosing as he will, and man is left free to elect his work and way, which is sure not to be the right and wise choice *till* he has learnt to discern good and evil.

Therefore there is in the lifetime of each a period of education (longer or shorter as it is carelessly, or diligently and wisely, used), in which the ignorant has to learn by more or less bitter experience the meaning of "*evil*," and by more or less better experience the meaning of "*good*"; and thus to get wisdom to appreciate and choose the good and avoid the evil.

In this period of education (as in all real education) the disciple must *learn*; he cannot otherwise be effectually *taught* even by the most divine teaching; and while he will not apply his mind to learning

and his heart to wisdom, he will be losing his time, will increase his trouble, and multiply his difficulties to any degree, and make his passage through his educational period needlessly and indefinitely long and painful, till he finds that perseverance in the *wrong ways* is evil and bitter, and that he is a fool to follow them (*see Jeremiah ii. 19*).

This mortal life is a season *not of probation but of education*. We are not placed in this position to see if in our untaught and inexperienced condition we will choose wisely and act rightly; but that with our capability we may attain to knowledge and wisdom and goodness under the guidance afforded us (*see Hebrews v. 14*).

But we are as sure to err (that is to sin) as the child who does not know its way is sure to wander astray in a wood with many paths; and the bitter fruits of evil are sure to be tasted by every one of God's offspring who *begins* to have a separate existence.

What then is the use of looking into the matter at all?

As we cannot become wise men of full age without passing through a childhood in which ignorance is sure to err, though not compelled to do so; in like manner we cannot arrive at perfection without beginning in imperfection.

It cannot be too constantly impressed upon our mind that if we were made, by the act of a power not in us, to know all without learning by the use of our capability and the observation of our sur-

roundings, we should not be even on the way to the higher destination which is set before us ; we should be kept in the right way, not as reasonable beings, by our rightly educated choice ; but as the horse is guided by bit and bridle, and can never be like his master.

It may here be remarked that as a child, though it has inborn capability to learn, and necessarily often *suffers* by the mistakes it makes in its ignorance, yet is not blamed for its errors until it has opportunity to learn, and by reason of use to have its senses exercised to discern good and evil.

So we are all subject to be judged, and so do we incur blame only when after we *ought* to know better we go wrong.

And the use of considering these things is not that we can by any means avoid original ignorance or know good and evil till we learn ; but the real use is that we may see the *necessity* of getting rid of our ignorance as soon as we can, and may feel the goodness of that purpose which, having made us capable of learning, has placed us in a school where we may become wise by giving heed to all around us and all within us which teaches those who will learn to know their true God and to know themselves.

We need never be afraid to push our acquaintance with the Creator of the worlds and the Father of all divine life too far, nor our acquaintance with ourselves as His offspring. The more we are aware of real greatness the more certain we shall be that

real goodness must belong to it ; and the more we are impressed with the sense of being children of God, as His offspring, the more we shall be ashamed to remain in ignorance or to continue in sin.

And as regards the question we have been considering, we may see more and more clearly that great goodness could neither make it necessary for man to sin, nor make it impossible for him to sin ; but would have us begin our life born free to choose and with capability to choose, and then to be educated into knowledge, to discern good and evil, and into wisdom to choose the *real good*—born God's offspring, born again into a fuller life of the glorious liberty of His sons. This glorious liberty (*Romans viii. 21*) is the theme of the teaching, and the object and end of the life and work, of Jesus ; He came “*to saye us—from our sins*” to redeem us from bondage to sin.

It would at first seem almost self-contradicting that God should not make it impossible for man to sin, and yet that the most divine act should be *to save men from their sins*, to bless them, as only they can be really blest, “*by turning men every one from his iniquities.*”

The apparent contradiction vanishes when we observe the difference between an outward constraining *force* and an inward constraining *love*. The one is bondage even if it keeps us in the right way, the other is freedom guiding us by counsel which we are at liberty to follow or not, as we may prefer.

The one takes away the privilege of self-control, right or wrong. The other perfects the privilege by

the addition of the knowledge of truth, and such true wisdom as when acquired by the teaching given to us in the school of life, will at last make us as *sure not to sin*; though no outward force compels us to obey, as we were sure in our ignorance to sin, though compelled by no outward force making it necessary that we should do so.

The change can only be caused by our coming to the knowledge of the true God, which is fully brought before us in the life and teaching of Jesus—the Teacher of divine truth, and Example of divine holiness—*The Son of God Himself*, and awakener of real active life in all the sons of God. Thus it happens that although we are born *ignorant*, and therefore sure to err, and to bring on ourselves the consequences of our ignorant errors, yet we are not born wicked to be punished by God for being what He made us. We are not blamed till we might know and do what is right and good—as it is told us. Before the law was made known, sin was in the world (and necessarily the fruits of sin), but sin is not imputed where there is no law.

A DIFFERENCE THAT MIGHT BE OVERLOOKED.

THERE may not, at first sight, seem to be a difference between the faith that believes that *my God* is Creator of all creation and Source of all life, and the faith that believes in the Creator of all creation and the Source of all life as *my God*.

But it is really a very different thing to take for my God that which may happen to be worshipped as God by the family or nation to which I belong, or whatsoever I may make the object of my worship, and then attribute to this (because I take it for my God) the creation of the universe and the gift of all life ; a very different thing, I say, from accepting, as my God, to adore and worship, the real Creator and Source of life.

The merest idolater or worshipper of the most fanciful creation of his own mind may attribute to *his God* the divine power of creating the universe and giving of life. He will find in the end that he is sadly mistaken, his whole life will be a mistake while he so deceives himself. But happy is he whose God is the Lord, the Eternal, who made the heavens and the earth, who keepeth truth for ever.

GODS AND RELIGIONS.

"Every nation made gods of their own."—2 Kings xvii. 29.
"Happy that people whose God is the Eternal who made
the heavens, the earth, and the sea, and all that is in them."
—Psalm cxliv. 15 ; cxlvi. 5, 6.

THAT which we call by the name of "*God*" may
not be *really* our God.

That is truly "*our god*" which has a kingdom
within us, the love of which influences our course
in life, whether that be the greatest and best of
Beings or the most unworthy thing that our heart
can desire.

Every one has a god. The covetous man is an
idolater. Gluttons and worldly men worship their
gods.

The *system* of worship which we profess and the
forms we follow may not really be those of *our
religion*.

That is truly our religion which is the devotion of
our life, spirit, soul, and body to that which is
our God.

So every one has a religion by which he worships
his chosen god.

Our religion will manifest the character which we
assign to our God, and this character will imprint
itself on our life.

It is therefore of the greatest importance that we

should choose what we worship as our God with a wise choice.

We cannot, indeed, choose who shall be our *Creator* or our *Father*. But we can, and do often, take for our god that which is neither Creator nor Father, but something that attracts our desire, some idol of our senses, or of our fancy, or of our fear.

If we were forced to do service to the true and real God, that would not make Him *really our God*. His kingdom would not be within us in our inmost heart.

To have the right God for *our God* two things are requisite as to our worship :—

I. That we choose *freely*.

II. That we choose *wisely*.

Overlooking either kind of choice will lead to confusion, superstition, or often to professed atheism or denial of having any religion.

Sometimes our choice is an active one, when we consciously give a preference to something to which we devote our life and our energies, deliberately giving it the sovereign place in our mind and heart.

But very often the choice is passive, when we *let* something *take* the sovereign place within us, whether that be a personal Being, or a material object, or an unreal idea.

In every case, that which has power to rule within us is, for the time, our god, and our religion then is serving that god.

While we profess to worship constantly the same God in all our outward forms and utterances, we may

really be continually changing our gods. Giving our inward devotion and real subjection of life either to that which, at the time, we consciously select as the object of our heart's desire, or to that which we suffer to usurp the sovereign power within us.

To fix our choice on that which cannot change, so that we may have within us "*a kingdom that cannot be moved*," we must be aware of an object for our choice that has *power* which we can thoroughly trust and *goodness* which we can thoroughly love. Both such as we can satisfactorily perceive and appreciate.

Then we may have for our God one whom we truly worship "with reverence and *with a good reasonable grasp*," which is essential to satisfactory faith, the faith which "*holds fast*" that which is good—having chosen freely and wisely. (Hebrews xii. 28, translated, "*Godly fear*." Rather, "*A good grasp or hold*.")

Towards the consideration of this choice and faith it is our next care to proceed.

GOODNESS.

That GREATNESS which includes *Power* and *Goodness* must be the character of whatever can have in us a kingdom that cannot be moved.

Or, in other words, in order to choose "*our God*" wisely we must be convinced of his *power* and his *love*, of his *greatness* and his *goodness*.

GOODNESS is that quality which has regard to the welfare of that for which it is good.

That only is goodness which is good for something. GOODNESS can be a reality only where a good being has existence. A *quality* cannot be in existence without something that has that quality.

Goodness, to be real, must be doing good.

Therefore must have power to do good.

So, without *power* goodness would be only imperfectly good for anything.

POWER.

POWER is that quality which has regard to doing that which has to be done.

That which is powerful *can* do something. Power can only be a reality where that which has power exists.

However great a powerful Being may be, if there is something which his power cannot enable him to do, he is powerless as regards that thing.

As goodness without power would be but imperfect goodness, so power without goodness would be imperfect power.

The *power* that made the universe and gave existence to man, is the *quality* of a Being who could create and give life—for it is done.

But though power could cause us to exist, and to have the faculty of choice and will, power cannot cause us to choose aright, unless our choice and our will be gained by a goodness such as we can understand and feel and value.

So the great powerful One *cannot* do the highest and most divine work unless goodness be joined to His power. And His very *greatness* is pledged to us, when we thus behold it, as the security of His *goodness*.

Greatness in perfection implies *goodness*.

Power in perfection implies *love*.

God is powerful in the highest degree, because He is good.

God is good in the highest degree, because He is powerful.

When the good and the powerful one is our God, then our religion will be the worship of the true God in truth.

The occasional forms and utterances of our professed religion may be variously adapted to declare our profession—but our real religion will be *the life we live*.

Such is an outline of the choice to which Christianity leads us—the religion whose root and growth comes from the revelation of God, through the teaching of Jesus ; who not only tells us what is good, but brings us to see Him who is good, and to apprehend and admire real goodness, so that we are led rightly to use our freedom of will by choosing the right choice, as to our God.

THE EXERCISE OF RELIGION.

HAVING consciously chosen for our God the most powerful and the best, we come to consider the *exercise* of that religion which will be the result of this choice.

Let us not mistake, by taking what are commonly called "*religious exercises*" for the *exercise of our religion*.

The *real exercise* of religion may be well compared to the exercise of military duty.

It is not by the regular performance of the required military exercises that the loyal and true soldier is proved; but by the exercise of the soldiership which pervades all his conduct and bearing, as well as his gallantry in the battlefield. The military exercises on parade and drill are only worth anything inasmuch as they serve to attain to this. And so it is with those religious exercises which consist of regularly performed acts, the observance of rites and ceremonies and ordinances, and recurring forms in public or in private.

These acts of worship may be reverently and strictly performed, and conscientiously observed as *religious exercises*, and yet may not result in the more *real exercise of religion*. And unless they proceed from a *really devout principle*, and result in an

habitual conduct and bearing in life, they are of very little value.

Nevertheless, he who values these religious exercises as secondary in importance, when compared with the exercise of religion in the trial and campaign of life, will value religious exercises really much higher than any one does who, giving them an undue preference, considers them THE exercise of religion.

Ordinances, rites, ceremonies, and forms, as well as creeds, articles, and confessions of faith, will, of necessity, fall into their due places as we think rightly of God and man, for according to our inward thoughts will be those outward expressions. If right thoughts prevail within, the outward tokens will be used reasonably, reverently, and acceptably. If wrong thoughts occupy the heart, superstition and idolatry will give a character to the outward expression.

The proverb says truly of man, “As he thinketh in his heart—so is he.”

CHRIST AND CHRISTIANITY.

As it is with *Gods* and *Religions*, so it is with Christ and *Christianity*.

The name “*Christ*” is given to very different characters, according as men view the work of *salvation*, and the character of divine humanity in Christ, and in all the offspring of the divine Father.

And their Christianity will take its tone and complexion from their notion of Christ and of His purpose.

An Apostle introduces Christ to his hearers by saying : “God anointed (*Christed*) Jesus of Nazareth with holy spirit and power.” And again, “God hath made this Jesus both Lord and Christ (*anointed*).” And His mission was declared to be, “To save people from their sins.”

Jesus is called in the Apostolic writings both “THE Son of God,” and “A Son of God” (this difference, though very important, is not observed in the English translation).

The words “THE Son,” imply complete superiority over all others in divine sonship.

The words “A Son,” imply the reality of sonship in all the offspring of God.

As “THE Son,” he is *chief* and Lord of all sons.

As “A Son,” he is brother and companion of all sons.

As “THE Son,” he shows us what the Father is.

As “A Son,” he shows us what all sons are to be like.

And Jesus the anointed Son (*The Christ*), is sent as MEDIATOR in order that unready minds and unfriendly hearts *might receive* the promise of the eternal inheritance. Not as might be expected, that by Him, the Father, against whom we had offended, might be brought to *give* or to *forgive*, but that the offending erring children might be led to *receive* the gift of eternal blessedness. (Hebrews ix. 15.)

If the opposite notion were to get possession of the

mind the whole of the mortal life, teaching, death, and present life of Jesus would seem to have an opposite character. Jesus would be represented as more accessible and kind than His Father and our Father, so that He would have a deeper claim and hold on our affection, and a higher place in our adoration than the Father. It would even seem as if the idea of the Son, in our religion and worship, might eclipse that of the Father, which would be a dishonouring of both the Father and the Son.

And thence might arise a habit of appealing to the Father *for Christ's sake*, to be gracious to us; as if it were thought requisite in order to obtain a favourable reception for the sons, who, having offended, repent and desire to return to their Father. As if the Father would not receive them because they were unworthy.

Surely no one could understand Christ's own parable of the prodigal son, and imagine that the Father requires anything to make the repenting lost one more than welcome. Worthiness is neither supposed on the one side nor looked for on the other.

He whose love never failed when his erring son was dead in sin, saw in the returning penitent, the fruit of that spirit, whereby, in his madness and misery, he was *brought to himself*.

That spirit spoke to him of a Father who loved him, and against whom he had sinned, but no doubts of the Father's love or of a favourable reception occurred to his mind. "*I will arise and*

go to my Father," was the prompting of that love, the fruit of the divine Spirit, which was in him (Galatians iv. 3—6). He went straight to his Father, and found far more than in his deep sense of unworthiness he could have expected.

And when a wanderer from the right way is thus brought to himself and brought to his Father to be received into the position of a son, from which he had fallen, will he not attribute his salvation to the mediation of that Mediator who was sent from the Father and by the Father to bring him home? (1 John iv. 14 ; 1 Pet. iii. 18.)

THE MISSION OF CHRIST.

CHRIST came forth from the Father, and came into the world, to reveal Him whom the heaven of heavens cannot contain. (John xvi. 20.)

Christ was seen by multitudes, to reveal Him whom no man hath seen nor can see.

Christ was tempted like as we are, that He might reveal Him who cannot be tempted.

Christ yielded up His own will, in revealing Him who worketh all things after the council of His own will.

Christ died to reveal the immortal God.
Thus Christ fulfils His divine mission.

JOSHUA AND PAUL.

How divine commands might be conveyed to human minds may be unknown to us ; but we may conceive an inward voice saying, "Go to such an idolatrous nation, and root out the idolatry." The same message given to Joshua and to Paul, meaning to the one "SLAY," to the other "SAVE." The difference would not be in the message, but in the backward or advanced state of Joshua or Paul.

Even to the same man the same message might, after an interval of some years, have quite a different meaning. Paul may be likened to a locomotive impelled by the same inward impulse, first towards Damascus and afterwards towards Rome, but with how different a guiding spirit—yet he was equally sincere in both instances. Sincerity does not acquit from blame where we might have known better, but it greatly modifies the blame.

The endeavour to save others from evil of any kind may be often without apparent present benefit to the sufferer, but to the unselfish person who makes the effort it is never lost labour.

The ready unselfishness which is prompt to make our life the means of good to others (by living or by dying in their service) is not to be attained by careful watching to abstain from care for oneself (which is

sure to induce too much thought about self), but by cultivating a kindly feeling and active care for others which will tend to smother the growth of selfishness as farmers like to abolish noxious weeds by a smothering crop of corn.

THE USE AND MISUSE OF PARABLES AND SIMILES.

THE practical use of these as illustrations to give a clearer view of a matter, depends much on the honest desire of the hearer or reader to see the purpose intended, and to apply the comparison as far as it is intended *and no farther*. There is no case in which an unfair pushing of a comparison beyond the plain intention may not make it appear absurd. As, for instance, where the prophet compares God to a *shadow*,¹ the perverse misapplication would be to represent it as calling God like a "*shadow that continueth not*"; a shadowy God.

A writer, thus perverting the use of Paley's illustration of his view of *design* in creation, by comparison with a watch, speaks derisively of "Paley's watchmaking God!"

It is hard to say whether we should most pity or blame this perverseness.

¹ "A shadow from the heat."—Isaiah xxv. 4.

The use of illustrations or similes (as in parables) for *proof* is also a great mistake. The saying that "*The wicked are like the troubled sea whose waters cast up mire and dirt,*" illustrates, but does *not prove*, the unresting state of the wicked. The *proof* is to be found elsewhere.

**WHAT ALMIGHTY POWER CANNOT DO ;
WHAT ALL-SEEING KNOWLEDGE CANNOT
KNOW.**

THE habit of attributing to a Divine Being qualities which are unreasonable tends to several evils, which may render people either superstitious or irreligious.

Prominent among errors of this sort stand the vague ideas, often confidently asserted, and still more frequently held unconsciously, that God can do what is impossible, and can know that which is uncertain.

It is true that an omniscient Being can know, concerning an uncertainty, that it is uncertain. But the next step is too seldom made by very many, who think themselves religious and reasonable.

That step is, that if anything is known to be *uncertain* its *certainty* cannot be known; for the simple reason that if it was known *it would not be uncertain.*

And a similar step is to be aware that if a thing is *impossible* it cannot be done by any power whatever ; for if it can be done it is not impossible.

On such truisms, or axioms, simple as they are, stand all foundations of sciences truly so-called.

It may be asked, Can you mention anything absolutely impossible, or certainly uncertain ? We will mention two. One of each sort, which have a special bearing upon the point intended to be brought forward.

First. It is *impossible* to make an intelligent being free to choose, while it is at the same time by any means rendered absolutely certain how the choice shall be made.

Secondly. It is certainly *uncertain* how such a choice will be made, while nothing controls that choice, or makes it certain.

There are two cases in which an intelligent being may be so controlled that the choice must be certain. The first is *bondage*, the second is *freedom*.

First, by a controlling power *without*.

Secondly, by controlling power *within*.

Firstly, when *another*, who has power to enforce it, *decrees* what shall be done. Then the controlled one has no real choice or will, nor any responsibility.

Or, *secondly*, when a being is *perfect in knowledge and wisdom*; for such an one cannot make a choice other than the best.

It would, therefore, be possible for a being, possessed of perfect knowledge and wisdom, to know certainly what another being controlled in either of

these ways would choose, for the choice would be rendered certain.

But if there are beings endued with intellect and reason, but who are as yet *imperfect* in knowledge and wisdom, and also *free* in the sense of not being under the constraint of any decree compelling their choice: the choice of such beings is necessarily uncertain. A very wise being might see a *great probability*, still there could be no *absolute certainty* where there is no competent acting control, without or within. And a perfectly wise being, knowing this *uncertainty*, could not know it to be certain.

An evasive answer is sometimes attempted, which not unfrequently silences inquirers who can be so silenced.

It is said that, even if God does know and foresee every future choice, word, and deed, yet God's foreknowledge does not *compel* men to choose this or that.

True, God's foreknowledge does not do this; but the most perfect knowledge cannot know anything to be *what it is not*. It only tends to puzzle people with words when an attempt is made to persuade them that what is *impossible* can be done, or what is *uncertain* can be foreseen certainly; though some devout persons really think that they honour God by such fancies.

Not only thoughtless and superstitious persons are often confused and misled, for want of being clear on these matters, but many who think freely and abhor superstition get into a perplexed way of considering

the order and state of the world (*kosmos*), because they fail to perceive what an Almighty power cannot do, and what an all-seeing knowledge cannot know ; failing, also, to perceive the opposite side, namely, what even the imperfect faculties of human nature can know and can do.

“ The superstition of our earlier years,
Even when its error to our mind appears,
Much of its power in our heart retains :
All are not freemen who revile their chains.”

Allegories and parables often serve to illustrate truths.

I here offer the following parable bearing on the so-often mooted question, “ *How can we account for the state of this world (kosmos) if there is a benevolent and mighty God ?* ”

The answer to which is rendered perplexing by the want of perceiving what it is that Almighty power cannot do, and what it is that all-seeing knowledge cannot know ; and by the fancy that it is *possible* to make man free and responsible, and yet *all* his ways determined by superior power.

THE TWO PAINTERS.

A PARABLE.

THERE were in a city two painters of high talent and taste. They had each ten sons.

In the painting-room, or *studio*, of the first he painted his beautiful pictures, attended upon by his sons, who, under his directions, prepared his canvas, strained and purified his oils, ground and mixed his colours, cleaned and repaired his brushes, and did all dexterously. But he himself alone, as master, painted the picture.

Every one who was admitted to his *studio* admired it ; all was in perfect order, and the picture progressed under his hand to its completion.

Each year he finished one, and at the end of ten years those who visited him beheld ten such pictures as the world had seldom seen, which graced his studio.

“ Yes,” he proudly exclaimed, “ they may well be admirable pictures. Every stroke of the drawing, every tint of the colouring, is my own work, the witness of the master’s skill and power! Year by year you have seen the progress ; now my studio is filled to your admiration and to my own satisfaction.”

The other painter also began with his ten sons, and when visitors came to his studio, after seeing that of his rival, they saw in the first year ten lads, each

with a canvas before him covered with an ill-drawn and worse-coloured attempt at copying the model picture which their father had set before them.

All exclaimed, "How miserable! How unlike the other studio, where nothing but perfect drawing and colouring was to be seen, and everything was in such order!"

The next year, and the following, things were not very different; and people were so disgusted and offended by the failures and imperfect work of the sons that they ceased to interest themselves in that studio, saying, "How much better does the other painter arrange his matters. He makes his obedient sons of use to him, and gives them work to do which does not require a *master's* hand or skill. All is as well regulated and as beautiful there as it is otherwise in this studio; there the yearly-completed pictures are as perfect and faultless as these are faulty and imperfect."

However, at the end of ten years, some persons who were considered the best judges of pictures were invited by the first painter to view his pictures..

Having been shown all of them, and having been told that each of the ten sons had filled the place he was at the first found fit for, and that they had all been useful servants to the great master, the paintings were admired as they deserved, and the judges duly complimented the artist who had produced them.

They then determined to go on to the other studio to see the difference.

To their surprise they found there no daubs nor

ill-drawn and badly-coloured pictures. If there had been such, they were removed.

But there were seen ten young men, each working at a picture of his own, and every picture a masterpiece.

When they expressed their admiration and astonishment, and declared that this studio was far more to be approved than the other, the painter addressed them thus :—

“ We have each succeeded in our purpose.

“ His was to create ten wondrous and beauteous pictures.

“ My purpose was to form of my sons ten master-painters like myself.

“ To do this I knew that I must needs have patience, while they learnt by experience under my teaching both to draw and to paint.

“ Some years ago you visited my *studio*, and I could see that you thought very little of it in comparison with the other. My sons were the doers of what was done here, and badly it was then done ; but by reason of use they have had their senses exercised to distinguish good and bad methods, and have learnt that the principles which I taught them are really the principles of good painting. They did not see this at first, though I told them. They tried their own plans, and so produced the confused and imperfect daubs which you saw and justly disapproved of. But these were all, as I foresaw, steps to improvement ; I could have had a *studio* ornamented with perfectly well-finished pictures if I had

chosen to be the doer of all that was done there ; but I preferred the years in which no one admired my studio, where all wondered at the display of bad drawing and painting which resulted from letting my uneducated sons be the doers of what was seen there. However, I am now satisfied after the toil and vexations of a life. It is true my patience has often been tried by my sons—the slowness of one, the wilfulness of another, and every one spoiling more than one picture by careless or wilful departure from the right principles. Each fault of theirs was a grief to me, but I bore it.

“ But now, at last, when I look at my sons and see them in the position I desired them to attain to —every one of them a true painter like his father—may I not well be satisfied ? ”

“ Yes,” replied the chief among the judges of painting ; “ it is indeed immeasurably higher and better to have formed of your sons ten *master-painters*, than to have painted any number of *master-pieces*, though they are also truly grand.

“ And his poor sons, whom he made so useful in simple obedience to his orders, are left just what they were, not in the least like their father and master. He must be sorely dissatisfied when he looks from his perfect but dead creation of pictures to his living but *unimproved* sons.

“ But tell us, how did it occur to you to think of this tedious plan, which required such patience and perseverance ? How were you ever able to go through those long years, when the other studio was so admired

and yours so despised and looked upon as unworthy of being the studio of a great master? I have heard it said—nay, I have myself said it—that the master of that studio cannot be a great and wise man—the condition of the studio shows it."

The painter replied : "I had confidence in my plan being good, and I had patience to wait for my satisfaction, and to bear with the disparaging remarks and the contempt of the world, because I took for my pattern and example the highest of all. Some people think that this world (*kosmos*), which I compare to a *studio*, cannot be under a great and wise Master, because so many things are *ill-done in it*. 'Whereas,' say they, 'a great and wise master would not do things ill, nor cause them to be ill-done.'

"If all the things that happen were done or ordered by Him, then it would be as with the paintings in that studio where all is done by the master himself. They would be all *well* done, and the world and all things and events in it would be like a succession of beautiful and perfect pictures, and if *that* was the purpose of the *Creator and Giver of life*, His purpose would thus be attained.

"But if His purpose is, not only to have things which are *created*, and therefore perishable, perfect in their temporary existence, and events that are passing excellent as they pass away—but rather to have children, His offspring, capable of divine action, and enjoyment, and life, as the divine Father and Master acts, and enjoys, and lives; capable, like Him, of choosing the good and rejecting the evil, so

that their excellence, *though derived from Him, should be really their own*, and their affection to Him voluntary : thus He sets them to acquire knowledge, and wisdom, and experience. He knows that in the process of this education they will assuredly do much that will be very ill-done, which *ill-doing* we call '*evil*' (for evil is not a material thing that exists, but it consists of the wrong use of good things) ; He, the Father and Master, will not interfere to do things right which He has given them power to do as they will, and which, in their ignorance, they are daily doing badly ; for His purpose is higher than to have things well done as they pass. It is to have people so improved by His teaching and their experiences, that they will use the *divine capability*, given to them as His offspring, to choose and to act rightly, even as He Himself does. So I learned not to interfere with my pencil or my brush to make my pupils' pictures good ; but I let their mistakes deform my studio, till by experience they learned to discern good and evil, and to perceive the truth and excellence of my rules, as well as the necessity of due preparation, both of themselves by practice, and of their materials.

"They do not now make light of the master's precepts. They see more and more, as they advance, the truth of his words, and the *kindly reason of his strictness*. They at last understand, what they would never have understood otherwise, why I suffered so much bad work to deform my *studio* during their education.

“And now that they, each one, have the glory of being real painters, they all unite in saying and in showing that they are my making, and that any perfection in their work is owing to my method and teaching. Thus their perfection is to my glory, more than any number of inanimate pictures ; even as a host of ultimately perfected ‘*offspring*’ is to God’s glory more than countless worlds of mere creation, peopled with mere creatures, obeying the will of their Maker because they must, and not because they delight to do so, nor because they partake of their Maker’s joy and satisfaction.

“He, who *from the beginning*¹ knew what ‘*the end*’ was to be, kept that *end* in view, and therefore permitted His offspring to do their ignorant will, while they were ignorant, in order that their own errors and faults might reprove and correct them,² and that their improvement might be the result of a change *within* them, and not of a compelling force or influence from *without*.

“I took my lesson from that teaching and example,³ and, as you see, it has not disappointed me in the result. Every mistake, every wrong-drawn line, every ill-chosen daub of colour, whether done carelessly, or wilfully, against the principles I had shown them, brought its rebuke, and thus at length its correction, and improved the work by convincing the mind ; so that even the most vexatious blunders and most perverse faults helped to that cure of their own

¹ Isaiah xlvi. 9, 10.

² Jeremiah ii. 19.

³ Ephesians v. 1, “*followers, imitators.*”

evil, which could never have been attained if the faults had never been brought to light ; nor as long as the source of the faults remained in the performers, unsuspected by them because undeveloped.

"Thus, sirs, you see where I learned my plan ; and you may judge both how it succeeded with me, and how the same principle must succeed in ultimate success and satisfaction, whenever it has a full and fair trial."

SELF ;

OR, THE THREE NATURES IN MAN.

WHATEVER is quoted or referred to in these pages, from the Bible, is quoted or referred to as having in *itself* evidence of truth, or of true principle, and so requiring no voucher for its authority. What is *divine* is surely able to plead for itself ; so without going into the question of *inspiration*, the Bible may be used as a source of information and suggestion, commanding itself to the heart and reason.

When Jesus was asked by what *authority* He spoke, He disdained to give any voucher ; as if He would imply, "Truth is able to prove its own genuineness and power ; it needs no other authorisation."

It is degrading the highest truth to bring it down to the level of teaching that requires evidence to prove its authority, although this also may be true.

Revelation is the removing whatever hinders us from seeing the truth as it is. Other teaching requires us to apply *evidence* to prove facts, or to support authority. It is no degradation to the latter to exalt the former.

The true meaning of “*revealed*,” is seen in Matt. x. 25. “*There is nothing covered* that shall not be *revealed*” (properly, *uncovered* and opened to view, —not merely *told* with authority and vouchers).

SELF.

To deny your *self* is held to be the test of true discipleship in almost every religious system.

A puzzling question hence arises in earnest minds, which are led to ask, “What is the *self* that I should deny? I am called on to prefer *self-denial* to the pleasing of self. What does this *preference* mean, if it is not that I must take greater pleasure in denying myself than in pleasing myself?

“Is there then *more than one self*, so that self can have joy, not only when self is denied, but even in the very denial of self?”

It may seem strange to answer “*Yea*” to this question. Yet it is the only conceivable rational answer.

Every one who has experienced the unsatisfactoriness of the *selfish* indulgence of self, and the satisfactoriness of the *unselfish* denial of self, has felt that there is more than *one* self. To feel this is better than merely to understand it; but it will be much

more satisfactorily felt when it is also understood ; as it may be if we will follow up the teaching on the subject in the Christian Scriptures, as it is endeavoured here to do.

There is a selfish self-denial, when we choose to suffer in order to gain for ourself some future good, or to expiate some past offence for which we are afraid of suffering.

THREE NATURES IN MAN.

THE New Testament writings speak of three natures in man,—“*Spirit*,” “*Soul*,” and “*Body*.” (1 Thess. v. 23.)

A “*Spirit*”—offspring of the Father of spirits. (Heb. xii. 9.)

A “*Soul*.” This name is misapprehended and misused, as if it meant “*the immortal spirit*.” The word is constantly used by speakers and writers as if it was the same as “*spirit*.”

In English there is no word derived from “*soul*,” as *spiritual* is from spirit, and “*bodily*” and “*fleshly*” from body and from flesh. So we must use an expression suited to convey the idea of “*that which belongs to this soul*.” And to do this we must first see what “*soul*” is.

The Greek word “*Psucbee*” (or *Psyche*) for “*soul*,” far from being the immortal spirit, is the *mortal*

life, and is always used in that sense in Scripture, except in such places as where we say “*every soul*,” meaning “*every man*” (Acts vii. 14).

The life which Jesus laid down, the life which we are taught to be ready to lay down, is this *Psuchee*, “*soul*.” The life which, when misspent, is so much lifetime lost, is this “*soul*.”

So “*Psuchee*,” or soul, really means “mortal life”;¹ and that which belongs to this soul (as there is no word for it like “*soulish*”) we must express by saying, “*that which belongs to this mortal life*.”

There is a very misleading translation in Paul’s Epistle to the Corinthians, where the man who chooses to belong to this mortal life, is called “*the natural man*,” and where the body suited to this mortal life is called “*the natural body*.” In neither place is there anything about “*natural*.” If there must be *one* word used, it must be “*soulish*” made for the occasion. (1 Cor. ii. 14; xv. 44.)

The word used for the “*life of God*,” and of the offspring of God, is quite different (“*Zoee*”), and has no connexion with mortality.

So usual is the misuse of the word “*soul*,” that to avoid being misunderstood, even after explanation, “*mortal life*” will be used instead, as expressing “*Psuchee*.”

“*Body*,” as contrasted with *spirit* and *soul*, means generally the *fleshly* body, called also “*the flesh*.” But “*body*” does not always mean a “*fleshly* body,”

¹ See note at end as to the meaning and use of the word.

for Paul writes, “There is a body for this mortal life (*natural body*), and there is a spiritual body.”

Firstly, there is in man, as he exists in this world, or in this state of things here, a created body, of earthy material, which has a low, sensitive, nervous life, like the plants and the lower animals.

Secondly, there is a bestowed life, with intellectual and reasoning faculty, a mortal life suited to the mortal body.

Thirdly, there is a spirit, a spiritual *body*, with its own life.

The first mentioned man is of the earth, earthy,—a temporary body, for a passing purpose. This body has a life, like that of the living plants and animals, liable to dissolution. (2 Cor. v. 1.)

The created and mortal man has an additional nature, added to this vegeto-animal life, with a higher quality, which we call “*intellect*” or “*reason*.” It includes ability to receive consciously impressions of things and events, to form ideas of them, and to consider and judge of them; also power to rule over the animal body of flesh, and to make it subservient to its will, so that the life thus controlled is no longer that of a mere brute.

So far man is a *creature*, made by one able to make, and endowed with intelligence and reason, by one able so to endow. A natural body with an intellectual nature, and considerable power—but by no means like his Creator.

Then comes the *third* nature. The real permanent *self*.

That which is created, *made* of earthy material, and *given* a life and qualities suited to a mortal body, may be dissolved, and, with its powers, may cease to be in its individuality.

But as there is a mortal body, so there is also a "*spiritual body*."

The human life of the mortal body is the mortal life (*Psucheē*) of which we have spoken. The life of the spiritual body is different (*Zoeē*). The one is the sort of life which Jesus laid down when He died. The other is the life which continued unbroken though He died.

The one is a life *given* by the Creator to His creature. The other is a life *inherited* by the offspring from the Father.

The first man, with body and life (both mortal), is of the earth, earthy,—capable of earthly knowledge and worldly wisdom—capable of using reason and exercising will—sensitive to pleasure and to pain, both of body and mind.

The second man is not of the earth, earthy; but is from heaven—the offspring of God.

We have spoken of a life of which man is partaker with the plants and animals: this is the lowest kind of life. It shows itself by actions which, however *unconsciously*, seek the welfare of the living thing. The capability of thus acting belongs essentially to this sort of life. Every plant seeks its fit nourishment, and absorbs it, separates the portion suited to its wants, and rejects or gets rid of the residue; we observe plants stretching their roots towards the mois-

ture which they need, and their branches towards the light which seems to delight them, as if they knew what to do. Some observers have even supposed that they have a kind of knowledge ; and assuredly a knowledge which is able to cause these things must be somewhere.

The bodies of animals, man included, are sustained much in the same way as the plants. But they have a higher quality of life, though the life of plants seems to include a more unerring instinct in the exercise of its limited powers.

The very lowest *animals* are such in virtue of this higher quality of life ; and when we come to the highest animals below man, we see a considerable capacity for being taught, but no capability of that conscious exercise of reason, which must precede the voluntary act of learning. Like the mere vegetable they are acted upon by influences exterior to themselves. They have intelligence, often in a high degree, but not intellect.

It is remarkable that those possessing the highest intelligence have by no means the most certain instincts, and that domestication or training always tends to dull their instincts, and makes them more dependent upon the master-mind of man, while they generally become much attached to those under whose influence they are brought. (Perhaps this occurs in the *animal* part of man also.)

There is a much more thorough difference between the intellectual life of the mortal man and the highest life of the lower animals, than between the highest mere animal life and that of the plants.

The intellectual life, possessing the faculties of reasoning consciously, learning voluntarily, and acquiring and accumulating knowledge, belongs to a higher race of beings than the mere animals. The most sagacious of these never invent anything. (Psalm xxxii. 9.)

There is a great gulf between the most intelligent mere animal and the intellectual, consciously-reasoning man ; but there is a still greater gulf between the intellectual man, *who lives for this mortal life as his real life*, and the *spirit man* ; that is, between the highest *creature* of God, and the *offspring* of God.

As the mere brute, with its highest intelligence, cannot receive things of intellect or of intellectual life, so the man who lives only the rational and intellectual life of this world, making the enjoyments of the flesh and of the mind his object in life,¹ though he is high above the lower beings who only live for the *flesh*, yet he cannot receive the things of the Spirit of God,² any more than the flesh can comprehend or appreciate the beauty and pleasure of refined intellectual life. To the man of this mortal life the beauty and the joys of the divine life are foolishness, —as little admirable to him as pearls to swine. He cannot know that beauty and joy because they are spiritually discerned.²

If man's *self* consisted only of a mortal body, with a life and capability such as belong to this mortal state, then he could not be blamed for living to fulfil the desires of the flesh and of the mind. These, if

¹ Ephesians ii. 3.

² 1 Cor. ii. 14.

left to themselves, can only act up to their own character and nature.

The carnal or fleshly nature, if it gets what satisfies its fleshly wants, is easily contented. But in man this is joined with the superior life of reason and intellect, which life cannot be thus satisfied. It is capable of *imagining* higher satisfaction than it can reach. This mortal human life (*Psuchee*) enables a man to picture to himself satisfaction in possessing wealth, fame, and other desirable things ; he can also plan and propose to himself means of attaining those things from which he expects satisfaction. And as the man given up to the brutish gratification of the appetites has a kind of low satisfaction in sensuality, so the man of this mortal intellectual life finds for a season a pleasure in controlling the desires of the fleshly nature, and keeping them within reasonable bounds, while his mind soars above gross excess of indulgence, and seeks its satisfaction in higher things than these. He feels confident that real satisfaction is somehow to be had, but the most successful men of this world and its life fail not only to attain to real permanent satisfaction, but they do not, with all their wisdom, perceive what it is that is wanting to their real satisfaction.

If the man of flesh and of intellect were the whole man, a very miserable creature he would be ; endowed with a nature superior to the brute, only to enable him to apprehend and long for a possible satisfaction —which, though reasonably seen to be possible in itself, would be actually impossible for him to attain.

But man is not left in so incomplete a state.

As there is a mortal body with a mortal intellectual life (*Psuchee*) so there is a spiritual body with its spiritual life (*Zoee*)—a body with its life, or a life with its body, from God direct. As a lamp is lighted from a flame, and has thus the nature of its source of life, so this spiritual man has his whole being from the source of all life and existence, and as a spirit, he partakes of the nature of the Father of Spirits.

Inasmuch as each individual spirit-man does not fill all space, each must have *bounds*, which implies form or shape; and a being which has form or shape *is a body*, though it may not be of earthy material, nor be perceptible to the senses of the mortal body.

In what way the mortal body with its mortal life is united to the spiritual body with its spiritual life, or what the spiritual body may consist of, whether it has any resemblance to the mortal body, or whether it is always invisible to mortal eyes, or occasionally visible, are interesting questions, not as yet satisfactorily solved, and do not directly affect the matter under consideration.

The life we have *as spirits* is “spiritual life.” Now life is not a material substance, but a *quality* of some substantial thing. Where there is life there must be something living, and that existing material substance or being is what we call “a spiritual body”—when the life is spirit life, and the body is one suited to that life. Such a living bodily-existing Being is the “spiritual man,” and, with the intellectual mortal life united to the body of flesh,

completes the human Being called "man," endowed with power to transmit to his offspring not only the bodily frame with its nature, but also both of the lives which he lives—the mortal life (*Psuchee*) and the spirit life (*Zoee*)—as a lighted lamp transmits its fire without loss to other lamps.

Whichever of the three natures, the *fleshy*, the *mortal intellectual*, or the *spiritual*, rules with sovereign power, is THE MAN for the time, the acting Self of the whole Being.

The spirit-man, as offspring of God, is capable of ruling the two lower natures as their lord and master; and when he learns to love and obey his divine Master and Lord he becomes qualified rightly to govern the other human natures in himself, and to make body and mind serve to the welfare of the whole man.

As man in this world is of a threefold nature, so each life and nature has its own due place, and has honour and happiness in proportion as it duly fills its own place.

The *flesh* has its place in obedience to the intellectual and reasoning mind. The *intellectual man of this mortal life* has his place in obeying the superior spiritual man, and in controlling the inferior fleshy nature.

The *spiritual man* has his place of honour and satisfaction when he is in filial accord with the Father of Spirits, and in obedience to Him governs the flesh and mind—his own lower natures.

When the spirit-man is aroused to look up to God

and down to the lower natures, as well as into himself, he becomes aware of the condition and position of all things here, and begins to see what it is that alone can set all things right. He can see that it is *impossible* to make such beings as men satisfied with that which is against their will, and which fails to fulfil the desire of their heart, *and therefore the only possible way to true satisfaction is to have the affections and will set on RIGHT things—on things that can satisfy.*

Christianity points out that when the higher natures are perfectly obeyed by the lower, then only is a satisfactory state of each and of all attained ; but without *affection* and *will* only imperfect obedience is possible, and we see that, in ignorance of what is truly best for them, every degree of human nature, till taught by experience, is inclined to seek its satisfaction in gratification of its own individual desires exclusively—that is, in *selfish* gratification.

The voice of Christianity addresses the spiritual man, calling upon him to awake from his slumber, and to rule the lower natures, showing him also how to do so.¹ It is not by force, crushing down or crushing out the impulses or desires of the flesh or of the mind, that the spirit can reign over the earthly body, or in the intellectual life ; but by regulating these, and by keeping them in their due position, so that when their duration is over they may have lived to the purpose for which they were given, as means

¹ Ephesians v. 14.

to *educate* the spirit-man to live the divine life—that life which has its satisfaction in the satisfying of all lives, from the life of the eternal living God to the life of the lowest thing that lives.¹

For this end the *offspring of God* is given a body of flesh, with its senses and with a life, or state of intellectual being, with its sensitiveness and powers, so that the spirit-man may by reason of use have these senses exercised to discern good and evil. These mortal natures with their senses *are given to him* under his power to profit withal. But *if he gives himself to them* under their power, destruction and not satisfaction pervades the whole. He who has the capability does not rule. They who have not the capability are misplaced on the throne, and disastrous is the consequence. However, one useful result can proceed from it : the painful lesson, the experience of evil which convinces that the way that leads to this end is the *wrong way*.²

Living this sort of life, where the lower natures reign, is called (but wrongly) “*taking your own way*.” It is not taking your own way if you are a human being with a threefold nature. It is the real immortal *self* letting the lower natures have *their own way*.

And then the blame is thrown upon them, as if *they could help it*.

As well might you blame fire for burning and water for drowning. Everything is *good* when in

¹ Romans viii. 9 to 15.

² Jeremiah ii. 19.

its place, and those things given to be most profitable, useful servants, as fire and water, are most destructive and most difficult to bring back under control if once permitted to get the mastery.

Yes, fire and water are so, and much more so are the lower natures in man, when *he who ought to rule* gives them the rein, fulfilling the desires of the flesh and of the mind. And *he* alone is to blame for not keeping them in subjection.

Where is the *spirit-man*, who should rule, while these natures, which are good as servants, are such evil masters?

As yet he is asleep, not awake to his capability, or his duty, or his privilege; or he is too slowly learning the lessons of good and evil, taught by the things that come through the senses by experience or by divine teaching.

But there is a voice that will not be silent, which from time to time makes itself heard.

Christianity points to that *voice* of truth, which always speaks in all creation and in all events, and makes it manifest that the *light* of life always shines to all, and in all, and around us all, to enable us all to see what is true. (Romans i. 19—20.)

Christianity is no new religion *in itself*; but it is new to those who do not see what is plainly to be seen if they would use the capability which is theirs from their Father.

The “*word*,” or voice, which tells in whatever form it comes to us, and also the *light* which makes manifest, would be a vain and useless utterance and

manifestation if man had not the capability to hear and understand, to see and be aware of the things said and shown.

And on the other hand, it would be vain and useless for man to have the capability to hear and see, if there were not a word *uttering* its message, and a light *manifesting* reality wherever that capability is found.

This mortal life (*Psuchee*) is a time of education, and this mortal body is an aid to that education, by means of the senses which, under the guidance of the reason and intellect, help to the discernment of good and evil ; while the creation and the order of things which we call "*the world*" ("*kosmos*") is a school in which the immortal man, the spirit, is educated for his endless life, that it may be a life worth living.¹

If the spirit-man has divine capability and power, why is he not master in fact ?

As in material and mechanical power and action, so in living or spiritual power and action, there must be an *energy*, or active principle introduced to set the power going, or a removal of the impediment that hindered the activity of the power.

As, for instance, there is *power* in the muscles of a man's arm while at rest, but his will can set that sleeping capability going, to help or to smite. An engine, with steam up, has *power*, but no *action*, a *closed* valve is the hindrance. Touch the lever which *opens* the valve and lets the steam act, and away goes the engine. In each case the *power* was there,

¹ 1 Timothy vi. 19 (revised version).

but asleep, till the life-wakening energy was applied, or till the hindrance was removed.

So in the spirit-man there is capability and power, and the reason he is not master in fact and in *act* is the want of the energy or moving impulse, the principle of activity. And that energy is LOVE. The hindrance to be removed is *selfishness*, which implies ignorance and unwise-dom. There is indeed a kind of energy in selfishness, and when the better energy is asleep it seems as if the worse were all-powerful ; for when a person has good principle, but goes to sleep upon it, another, who has bad principle, and acts up to it, will have the predominance. And so while love is drowsy, selfishness succeeds and recommends itself. Under its influence intelligence, intellect, and reason, learn, discover, invent, and do wondrous things ; the power is set in activity, and knowledge, discoveries, inventions, operations are the result. But alas for the real ultimate permanent profit or satisfaction. The spirit of selfishness is at the root, and there will be bitterness in the fruit.

But on the other hand, those whose energizing principle has been the joy of benefiting others, though they may seem to be making slow progress, toiling, heavy-laden, meeting many obstacles and discouragements, yet are always progressing, and not always so slowly as it seems. Patience is counted for slowness by those whose selfishness makes them impatient, and in their impatience they often put hindrances in the path of the unselfish.

But the very mistakes and errors of the selfish,

wonderfully and surely, if slowly, become aids and furtherance by the alchemy of love, for the good of all, even of the selfish themselves, when they find out by painful experience how wrong they were. Thus by their very sins teaching others and themselves too.

“ For by the light of love we learn with wonder
The lesson that the wrongs of ages teach
To men, by selfish contests torn asunder,
The good of all must be the good of each.”

The longer the lower natures are permitted to rule, the sorer, if not the longer too, must be the struggle of the spirit-man to become the master (obedient to his superior only), or in any way, or at any period, to attain to his right “ *position as a son of God.*”¹ Old memories will arise taunting and tormenting, and old habits will try to assert their old influences, at times perhaps too successfully. Yes, “ the way of the transgressor is hard ; ” and the way back often appears so much harder, that the wrong way is farther pursued in very despair ; but in vain, seeking rest and finding none, “ like a *troubled sea that cannot rest.* ”

Man, with his three natures, cannot be turned from the wrong way and be brought into the right path by *outward* force compelling him. To attempt to do so would be to try to thwart God in His purpose as to man’s destiny, which can only be fulfilled by God’s love bringing man to love good, and to love God, and to love all. To make His enemies love

¹ In the Greek *πιοθεσία*, translated “ *adoption.* ”

Him, to make them love one another, is God's way of abolishing *selfishness*, while each *self* can be satisfied. When *love* is the moving principle, although that love constrains the spirit to act one way, nevertheless the spirit is conscious that no *outward* force is compelling, and that the choice is free; but the freedom must be freedom from the slavery of inward ignorance and error as well as from outward force, or else it is only freedom to choose one slavery instead of another.

A view of the wrongness of *selfishness*, and of the rightness of *love*, sets the man in the right track indeed; but he is not therefore at the desired haven. He wants the counsel of a Higher and Wiser One to guide him, and when he feels that want, and seeks that counsel heartily, then to follow that counsel is truly *freedom*, for it is to do what he longs to do, whereas it was a *slavery* to be bound to follow it while he had no desire to do so.¹

When the SPIRIT-MAN comes thus far to *himself* (to a conclusion that he is the proper *self* of the whole man, and a son of the spirit-Father) he will be drawn towards that Father. The very sense of his degradation in fulfilling the desires of the lower natures (flesh and mind) will drive him to that Father with a feeling of confession of his unworthiness, but in assurance that, following that Father's counsel as his guide, he shall be made partaker of the satisfaction of that Father's children with Him who loved

¹ Psalm cxix. 44, 45.

us and devoted HIMSELF for our welfare, and who is the example of all real SELF WITHOUT SELFISHNESS. He is the perfection of the threefold life, in whom the *flesh* and the *intellect*, being in subjection to the *spirit*, are exalted to their highest position.

ANECDOCE ILLUSTRATIVE OF THE PRECEDING.

A meeting of clergymen was held in a district, alternately at the residences of the different rectors.

At one of these meetings the name was mentioned of a person supposed to be an *infidel*, and the wife of the clergyman in whose house they were assembled, asked why they accounted him an unbeliever?

One of those present said, "He does not even believe that *a man has an immortal spirit*. What do you think of that?"

She replied, that she did not consider this a proof of infidelity in the Gospel, "for," said she, "I quite agree with him *in that*."

"You do not believe that you have an immortal spirit, madam?" said an old clergyman, while all looked horrified at this declaration. "Then pray *WHAT do you believe?*"

"I believe that I *am* an immortal spirit, and that I *have* a mortal body," she answered.

Some of those present seemed to fail to perceive the difference at first, but a little consideration and discussion caused them all to admit, not only that the lady was right, but also that the *habitual sense* of *being* essentially a *spirit*, while the mortal body is

only a *possession* given for a temporary use, is that which should prevail at all times, and that the prevalence of the idea that a man's *self* is the mortal body, while the immortal spirit is something *belonging* to him, is simply a mistake, and a mistake which has very hurtful consequences ; causing us to live as mere *creatures of a great Creator* instead of *the offspring of the Father of spirits*, thus hindering us from aspiring, with expectation of success, to be *imitators of God* as beloved children,¹ and, on the other hand, preventing us from feeling the *shamefulness* of our degradation in ungodliness and inhumanity ; sheltering ourselves from self-blame by the apparently good excuse *that we are only weak mortals*. As if a good God could require or expect *incapable* beings to be capable of understanding, or of doing, what is true or what is right.

It is because, as spirit-beings, we are capable of understanding divine truth, and of acting with the freedom which the knowledge of the truth only can give, that we are also capable of being blameworthy when we fail to use our spiritual privilege and power to receive the teaching of God, and to do His will as His offspring, partakers of His spirit. In other words, our *divine* nature makes us *guilty* when we do wrong, allowing the lower natures to be masters.

But the good message from the Father of spirits says, "Because ye *are sons* (though erring children) the spirit of sonship is sent to you² to stir you up

¹ Ephesians v. 1.

² Galatians iv. 6.

to cast off the slavery of error, and conquer and rule your body and mind, which are given you for your use, as your servants, that in love you may serve one another, and thus, in so far as lies in you, you may glorify your Father, as is manifested in the life of that Son of the Father, in whom the Father is well pleased, and is glorified in the life He lived, in the life He laid down, and in the life He lives for evermore."

Yet for want of *cultivating the habitual sense of our spiritual selfhood*, even those who have seen and acknowledged the fact are apt to fall into the habit of feeling, speaking, and acting, in forgetfulness of this important truth.

NOTE AS TO THE WORD "SOUL" (OR "PSUCHEE").

THIS word is used in the New Testament to signify the life which is mortal and can come to an end or be laid down, or be lost, as to its purpose, by misuse. The word is also occasionally used, as we say (in Acts vii. 14) *three score and fifteen "souls,"* for so many *persons*.

EXAMPLES.

Matthew vi. 25. Take no thought for your *life* what ye shall eat, &c.

Matt. x. 39. He that loseth his *life* for my sake.

Matt. xx. 28. To give his *life* a ransom.

Luke ix. 24. Whosoever will save his *life* shall lose it.

John x. 11. The good shepherd giveth his *life* for the sheep.

John xii. 25. He that loveth his *life* shall lose it.

Acts xv. 26. Men that have hazarded their *lives*.

1 John iii. 16. He laid down his *life* for us, and we ought to lay down our *lives* for the brethren.

In these and all other places where it is intended to mark a mortal life, the word is "*Psuchee*," for "*life*."

On the other hand, where a life that is not defined as a mortal life is intended, the word "*Zoee*" is used for "*life*." As :

Matthew vii. 14. The way which leadeth unto *life* (*Zoee*.)

Matthew xix. 16. What shall I do, that I may have eternal *life*?

Matthew xix. 17. If thou wilt enter into (the) *life* keep the commandments.

Mark x. 30. In the world to come, eternal *life*.

Rom. vi. 22. The end everlasting *life*.

In short, wherever spiritual, eternal, or endless life is spoken of, this word "*Zoee*" is used, and never "*Psuchee*."

Psuchee is often translated "*soul*" as well as "*life*," which adds to the confusion, as for example—

Luke xii. 20. This night thy "*soul*" (or mortal *life*) shall be required of thee.

A third Greek word is also translated "*life*." ("*Bios*,") meaning the *sort of life* which any one leads. As we say, "He leads a bad *life*." And as in

1 Timothy ii. 2, "That we may lead a quiet and peaceable *life*." And 2 Timothy ii. 4, "The affairs of *life*."

These *three* meanings all being expressed in English by *one* word, "*life*," and one of the Greek words being arbitrarily translated, sometimes "*life*" and sometimes "*soul*," leads to much confusion, and to the loss of much precious teaching and suggestion.

NOTE.—The word "*soul*" has so become a household word, in the sense of "*immortal spirit*," that it seems hopeless to rescue it (as the translation of *Psuchē*) from the misleading meaning thus attached to it. It might be easier to use the expression "*mortal life*" in any revised translation, and the word "*mortals*" or "*persons*" where souls are mentioned, as in Acts ii. 41.

GUILT AND WICKEDNESS.

INNOCENT AND GOOD.

GUILT is the result of having broken the law.

Wickedness is the condition of one breaking the law in will or in deed.

There are laws of principle.

There are laws of nature.

There are laws of social life.

"Are you guilty of breaking any of these laws? If you have broken the law your guilt is a fact. You cannot plead "not guilty." It cannot be *undone*, but it can be *forgiven*.

The fact of forgiveness granted and accepted is equivalent to the imputation, and the acknowledgement of *guiltiness*. Neither the punishment of unfor-given guilt, nor the forgiveness of guilt on repentance, makes the transgressor of the law *not guilty*—each treats him as convicted and guilty. In other words, punishment or forgiveness cannot at all clear the guilty, cannot make that which was done by you not to have been done by you.

But though it is worse to be still bent on doing wrong, than to have done wrong, *wickedness* is not like *guilt*. The state of having done wrong cannot become a state of innocence, or freedom from the guilt of having transgressed ; but the state of being inclined and willing to do wrong can be put an end to, and is put an end to by a change in the spirit of the mind. When the wicked turns away from his wickedness and lives a new life, he may become a new man, but nothing can make him *innocent*.

HONOUR ALL MEN.

“HONOUR all men” implies “despise no man.”

In our condemning and contemning a human being because he is very vile, we unconsciously condemn ourselves for not seeing and sympathising with the higher nature in the erring humanity.

That only is truly vile which has the capability of being otherwise. A worm is not despicable because it crawls.

The higher nature is still there when a man is most vile. It is by addressing this higher nature, in terms of goodness, that the vile can be brought to repentance. (Romans ii. 4.)

Human *pride*, that mother of selfishness, cannot condescend to care for the vile. Divine love exalts itself in doing so, even for the selfishly proud.

He who despises the most vile, and cares not for the most degraded, knows not himself—neither his worst nor his better side.

He who despairs for the vilest, knows not the divine hatred of sin, nor the divine love to sinners.

SIN is an action, going the *wrong* way. Even divine power could not make this way lead to the *right* end.

To turn a sinner from the error of his ways can alone save him from the consequences of his persevering in the wrong way.

Divine law is the truth. It does not cause anything to be right or wrong, but it commends and commands the right way, and condemns and forbids the wrong.

To save the vile from vileness is to fulfil a divine law.

REVELATION

REVELATION is taking away whatever hid something that was concealed by it. Revelation is not, as is often supposed, telling us what is behind or under the cover, still unseen by us. When anything is really revealed to us we perceive *it* in its reality, and do not merely depend upon what is told us about it.

Our sins have hid the true God from us. That is to say, "Our submission to the will of the flesh and of the mind has interfered, so as to prevent a true view of God."

The sinner committing sin is the slave of sin, fulfilling slavishly the desires of the flesh and of the mind.

To set him free from this bondage is to take away that which hinders from seeing God as He is.

Christ *revealing* the Father is, in other words, Christ taking away what hinders us from a true view of God in His greatness and goodness, and so enabling us to see what had been hid, as the sun is hid by a cloud.

As the genial heat of the sun disperses the cloud and thus reveals the sun, so the goodness of God shown in Jesus enlightens our dark minds, warms our cold hearts, teaches our ignorant intelligence, turning us every one from his iniquities. This is REVELATION indeed.

OUR SAVIOUR.

We count that to be the character of our “*Saviour*” which represents Him as saving us *from what we most dread*, whether that be sin or punishment. Some think He would be the real Saviour who would procure by any means the remission of *punishment*; others would rather desire the remission of *sin*, even if no punishment were feared, or though all needful chastisement were sure.

To remit or *put away* due punishment would be no blessing to the persisting sinner, but to take away (or remit) sin would be a blessing, though due chastisement be inflicted.

As he whose joy is taken away is one who ceases to rejoice, and he whose grief is taken away is one who ceases to grieve, so he whose sin is taken away is one who ceases to sin.

He is the real Saviour who saves His people from their sins, and blesses them by turning them every one from their iniquities.

For there can be no real peace here or hereafter to the wicked.

LIFE.

THERE are two kinds of life.

1. Life which is mere existence in a particular state, as plants and animals have life.

2. Life which, with existence, has the divine capability of being good and doing good. (1 Tim. vi. 19, *Revised Version.*)

The first is our animal life.

The second is our spiritual life.

There are enjoyments which belong to each life. They who give themselves to live the first *as their life* find that its enjoyments always end soon, and often sorrowfully.

They who choose to live the second *as their life*, find that its joys increase, and give comfort in times of passing sorrows, even while these continue.

To be devoted to the first life prevents the enjoyment of the joys of the second.

To be devoted to the second does not prevent the enjoyment of the joys of the first, but by influencing the first or lower life it increases its joys, and hinders those excesses by which much enjoyment is lost and much sorrow is produced.

Jesus came that those who exist might have (real) life, and have it in increasing abundance, and might have His joy fulfilled in themselves.

THE SUCCESS OF THE STRONGEST.

THAT is strongest which *can*, where the others *cannot*. A weak man with a long lever *can* remove an obstructing stone which a stronger man with a shorter lever is *unable* to stir. The weaker one with the better means is stronger than the other with the less effectual instrument, and succeeds where the other fails.

If we know the power of the long lever we will not think it is advisable to lay it aside for the shorter one, or for the mere force of human strength, even if the employer of the long lever does not appear to succeed, while the efforts of the strong man seem to give hope of his possible success. We should rather say, the long lever is ill applied, or it is held so as to shorten the length of its action, and so to reduce its power. We are sure it will eventually succeed, if only it be really long enough and perseveringly applied, and no ridicule or persuasion could persuade us to lay aside the means by which we knew we were sure to attain our end.

When we meet with *obstacles* in our way, while we try to go on as followers and imitators of Jesus, due means must be used to remove them, whether they arise in ourselves or occur in others. These are chiefly—ignorance, perverseness, folly, enmity, and the like. God's way to remove these in us is by His goodness and love, chiefly shown in the life and

teaching of Jesus, the means by which He leads men to that change which is called "*repentance*."

It very frequently will befall us to meet with obstacles in the mistakes, ignorance, perverseness, and even enmity of others, and if we are not of Cain's disposition, saying, "Am I my brother's keeper?" we must desire to assist in removing these obstructions to our brother's happiness, which we shall naturally feel the more if they occur in those who are our kindred or companions.

Then let us imitate God, and Jesus the Son of God, and as children of that Father and followers of that Son let us take the long lever of longsuffering—meekness and gentleness—the weapon of divine charity, in the assurance that "charity never faileth." And let us look to Jesus, mindful what contradiction He endured, how in His longsuffering He was ridiculed and mocked because He would not call for the tokens of power by force which the enemies challenged Him to use, and which His very friends expected He would bring to bear, so as to overwhelm His foes. As He was taunted, so shall we be when we stick to our principles and meet enmity with love, railing with blessing, violence of speech or action with meekness and gentleness; our meekness will be called weakness, our gentleness, helplessness. It is a trial—we must bear it and go on in the assurance that the *strongest* will be successful.

UIOTHESIA AND DOULEIA.

The Condition of Sons and the Condition of Slaves.

A BORN son may yield himself to the spirit of a slave. While he is in that degraded state he cannot enjoy the position of sonship. To place him in that position the spirit of sonship must be aroused in him (called the spirit of *Uiothesia*).¹ (Romans viii. 15.)

The spirit of sonship will enable and impel him who is led by it to address his Father as "FATHER." It does not make him to be his father's offspring, but it raises him to the dignity of that position, even if he has so forgotten and degraded himself as to be led by the spirit of bondage to look upon his father as merely his master, binding him in unwilling slavery.

It is by being made aware of what he is that a man "*comes to himself*"; and being humbled and ashamed that he (a son) had let himself fall into the position of a slave (and not even a slave to a worthy master), he may at first, in the agony of his repentance, doubt his reception as a son in his father's house, and aim only at being a servant. But if he be really come to himself, the spirit of *uiothesia*, or sonship, will cast out the spirit of *douleia*, or bondage, and with confession of heartfelt unworthiness he will cry, "Father." (Galatians iv. 5, 6.)

¹ Translated "*adoption*."

But Almighty power could not place him in the condition of a son unless he was really led by the spirit of "*uiothesia*."

The spirit of "*douleia*" can degrade one even living in the father's house, making him discontented and unloving, as occurs in the conclusion of that most beautiful of fictions revealing heavenly truth, from which I am drawing the life of what I try to express here. The elder brother is addressed as "son," and reminded by his father how he has been dealt with as a son; but he (in unsonlike spirit), says, "These many years am I *in bondage* to thee,"¹ and, grudging his brother's restoration, he overlooks his father's loving generosity, which had made him a partner in all his possessions. (Luke xv.)

FAREWELL!

I USE this word, my reader, not as a token of parting from you, but as an expression of my heart's desire that "well may you fare," not now only, but for ever.

If the words, "*Love one another*," have a real meaning to you and to me, they imply that one of us cannot "fare full well" while the other "fares ill"; at least that the welfare of either would be sadly

¹ Translated, "Do I serve thee." The word "serve" is "am *in bondage*."

mixed with sorrow as long as the other could not be a partaker of it. The one could not be satisfied while the other suffered.

The more we think of God and man the more plain it will be that God's satisfaction, as regards man, is man's *welfare*. "GOD IS LOVE" expresses this.

In a real, though a distant, imitation of that love I say to you, whoever you may be,

"FAREWELL."

As, in material substances, action and reaction are equal, so I shall perhaps be justified in the idea that also from my reader an echo may respond,

"*Farewell!*"

CONCLUSION.

A CONCLUSION from thoughts on God and man is, that there is a power so great that in the most powerful it controls itself, and such an expression as "*cannot*" becomes applicable to even the Almighty, because *He is almighty*.

Thus, there are some things which, on account of His very Godhead, God *cannot do*, not that such things cannot *be done*, but as these are *bad* and He is good, it is impossible that *He* should do them.¹

¹ See p. 53.

So, again, there are things which, on account of His very perfection, He *cannot fail to do*. Such things could be left undone, but as it would be bad to do so, *He* could not leave them undone.

It may seem a contradiction (of the sort called a *paradox*) to say that some things, in themselves quite easy to be done by either God or man, are impossible to be done by them, and the impossibility arises from the indwelling of the highest qualities, divine or human.

For instance, to take a case of every-day occurrence, a man is looking for a house in a street. He does not know on which side it is. *His ignorance enables him* to look for it on the right or on the left side. If by any means he ascertains the truth that it is on the left, he *cannot* look for it on the right, though it is as easy for him to do so as before, for there is nothing but his knowledge of the truth to hinder him.

And as *knowledge* may thus render a particular act or omission impossible, so may *wisdom, understanding, and love*, and the more surely and plainly the more perfect and divine these qualities are.

Therefore I conclude that if you, my reader, have at all seen into my thoughts in these pages, you will come to the conclusion that, as sure as knowledge is intelligent, and wisdom wise, and power strong, and, above all, love amiable, though our thoughts may diverge and our paths separate, so surely will these converge and meet in the view of eternal truth and in the way of eternal right. In this is my joy, as I

think of God and man, and seek to live that life which is life indeed,¹—which is life, was life, and always will be life; for it has no connection with death; that life which is not only promised, but *revealed*² through the all-conquering *truth*.

¹ P. 99.

² P. 97.

POSTSCRIPT.

SINCE the preceding "*Thoughts*" were in print, it has been suggested that a question has not been given the prominent place here which was given to it in my former volume of "*Thoughts on Truth and Error*," namely the question of the *purpose*, and consequently the *duration*, of future suffering.

Though the doctrine pervading these pages would probably convey to a thoughtful reader the view of the writer in this respect, it may be more to the purpose and more faithful to add a few words directly upon this matter.

The *purpose* of punishment being correction,¹ and the intention of our Father being that we should by our profiting thereby be partakers of His holiness,² the *duration* must needs depend upon the purpose and intention being attained. "There is no peace to the wicked."

The only possible salvation from that terrible state of "*no peace*" is to be saved *from being wicked*. Fear of punishment may keep some from particular acts of wickedness, but *love* alone can keep any one from being wicked.

The love of God towards His offspring has been treated of in these "*thoughts*." But some will say that love ceases if a sinner perseveres till his *death*.

¹ Jeremiah ii. 19.

² Hebrews xii. 9-11.

True, *eternally* true is it that while a man continues in that enmity to God and rejection of His holy law, he, by his own act, keeps himself in that condition where the worm dieth not and the fire is not quenched, nor can be ; and if a sinner in this life can contrive to enjoy a comparative degree of freedom from suffering, or even of pleasure, he is only like a drunken man who thinks himself happy, because he does not *feel* his losses or his dangers. But though man may widen his distance from God and from the peace the wicked can never have, and may live a life of enmity, and die every kind of death, making his way of repentance and reformation more and more difficult, painful, and long,¹ yet neither *life* nor *death* shall be able to separate him from the love of God that is revealed in Jesus Christ.²

Who can imagine a state of perfect happiness for himself while he knows that even one of his fellow-men whom he has been taught and brought to love as Christ loved him, is not only condemned to suffer the consequences of his sin as long as he chooses to go on in sin, but is shut out from repentance, and in torment endless and unspeakable ?

Some persons look on the doctrine of the ultimate salvation of all men with terror and horror, as if it contradicted the truth of the eternal suffering of *sinners*, while really it only contradicts the eternal triumph of sin.

Reader, can you look forward to a heaven for yourself while I may be in the hopeless, endless

¹ See p. 88.

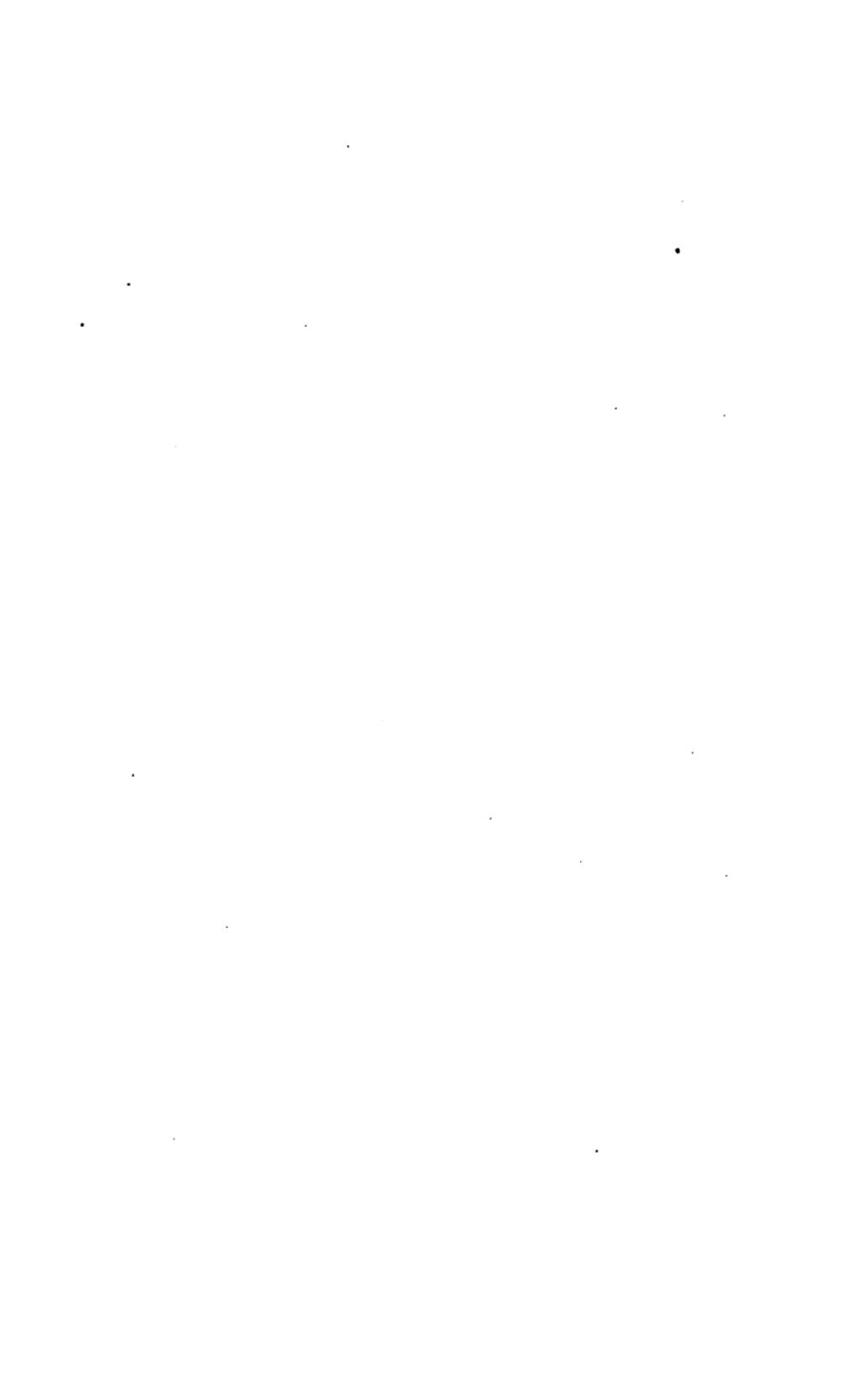
² Romans viii. 38, 39.

hell? If I knew you there, and believed that God's love would not reach you, nor His goodness invite you to repentance, there could be no heaven for me if I was minded like Jesus, no real love of God in me while I believed the almost incredible teaching that even in one case the love of God was finally conquered. This view of ultimate salvation is quite different from the degrading idea that when men have suffered enough for their past offences they may be permitted to pass into a state of happiness. *Suffering is no satisfaction for sin.* It is a result of sin, and may help to convince sinners of the error of their past ways and their wrong endeavours to attain satisfaction of their hearts' desire.

Here or hereafter the struggle must be made to conquer selfishness, to learn and obey the truth, and to live the life which has no death. Without this conquest, torments, however prolonged, can never bring one man into that kingdom which consists of Righteousness and Joy and Peace in a Holy Spirit.¹ Till that conquest is won the man is not excluded by God's will, but by his own wilfulness.²

¹ Romans xiv. 17.

² See pp. 88, 89.



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THE END.



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